

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 30, 2015

I really don't think this show needs an in depth preview. It's the Raw after Wrestlemania and the expectations are all through the roof for tonight. We're going to see debuts, big storyline development and fallout from Wrestlemania. This is my favorite show of the year and it has a lot to live up to after last year's edition. Let's get to it.

We open with the only real option we had: Lesnar and Heyman, with one wanting blood and the other likely wanting to find catering. They bragged about the big title match last night and how Lesnar did exactly what he said he would but then Seth Rollins had to interfere and steal Brock's title. Heyman threatened litigation, but Brock would rather have his rematch tonight instead. This brings out Stephanie, who actually sells the arm injury from Rousey last night, and says Rollins is on his way here and will fight when he arrives. This was basically HHH wanting a match with Bryan last year but not as memorable.

Daniel Bryan beat Dolph Ziggler to retain the Intercontinental Title with the running knee in a match the live crowd thought was FAR more entertaining than it really was. Yeah it was entertaining, but they gave the guys a standing ovation near the end. That was way more than they deserved, especially in a match that didn't last twelve minutes. Post match Barrett came in but Sheamus returned for the save, only to turn heel and lay out Bryan and Barrett.

One of the things discussed most since last week has been Sheamus' new mohawk haircut and braided beard. I get the idea of wanting to change things up for someone who has become as dull as Sheamus (love the in ring work, bored by the character but I still really like him overall), but dear goodness man. You can't expect to have anyone hate this guy if they're too busy laughing at him for his stupid haircut. I can't imagine that lasts until even Extreme Rules, but it didn't exactly have the intended effect. At least I hope it didn't.

The first callup of the night was the Lucha Dragons, who stole the eight man tag also involving the New Day, Cesaro/Kidd and Ascension. Kalisto was all over the place and is definitely being tooled as the new Rey Mysterio. I dig the guy and there's nothing wrong with having a small guy that flies all over the place and does a bunch of cool flips. Ascension is dead in the water and New Day is getting ready to go for an ill fated swim.

Now we get to the big story of the night as Brock Lesnar came out for his match with Rollins, but Seth said he was too jetlagged to fight. Brock didn't quite care for that and beat up the Stooges and Cole, the latter of whom had a bad neck (of course he'll be back on Raw this week because we NEED Michael Cole). He also turned over the announcers' table, which for some reason wasn't turned back over all night, even once Byron Saxton and Jerry Lawler came out to replace the announcers.

The big thing here though was Brock screen refreshing a cameraman and being suspended by Stephanie, whose arm is totally fine now because of course it is. This was a way to get Brock off TV for the summer, which is fine, especially considering how big of a face pop he's going to get when he finally returns. Post break, Stephanie went into full screech mode to say Brock will be her censored, which is EXACTLY what this segment needed: Stephanie looking strong and Brock not being able to retaliate. I was getting scared there for a minute.

Damien Mizdow beat Stardust in a quick match which only existed so Miz could come out and attack Mizdow to continue their feud.

Not Adrian Neville had his big debut and beat Curtis Axel in less than eighty seconds. This was all it needed to be and Neville looks like a great high flier. Put the Adrian back though as just Neville is kind of an odd name.

Now we get to one of my favorite parts of the night: the first weekly John Cena Open Challenge for the US Title. This could open up a lot of doors with Cena possibly putting over one guy after another week after week. Now for those of you who don't get the meaning of wrestling terms, putting someone over doesn't mean losing to them. The best example for

Cena is Damien Sandow last year. Yeah Sandow lost the match, but he never looked like a bigger deal in his career. Being paired with Cena is like being paired with Undertaker at Wrestlemania: you're automatically a bigger deal because you get to rub elbows with him.

This week's challenger was Dean Ambrose, who had a really good match against Cena but came up short, eventually getting caught in the AA. This was one of the longer match of the night and while it took some time to get going, once they hit the third gear with the finishing moves, I was totally into the match and bought the Dirty Deeds as a near finisher for Ambrose. Dean teased a heel turn post match but it didn't come. I could easily see a rematch and wouldn't complain about watching it. Good stuff here and I'm really looking forward to seeing who challenges Cena in the future. Some NXT people would be very nice choices.

Rollins bragged, Orton stared, Big Show and Kane continued to exist for reasons I don't quite get. Well at least not this level. A six man is teased for later with Orton having to get some partners. We knew Reigns, but the question was who else.

AJ/Paige/Naomi beat the Bella Twins/Natalya in a match I already forgot about when I did the Reviewing the Review for Wrestlemania XXXI as I thought AJ's last match was at the big show. This match is noteworthy for two things: Naomi hitting the Rear View to pin Nikki and a bunch of fans chanting some very derogatory things at the Bellas and Naomi.

Here's the thing: yeah those chants are unnecessary and insulting, but I wouldn't worry about them yet. You can't base anything long term off the post Wrestlemania crowd as they exist to get themselves over. It doesn't help that the Bellas are treated as nothing but idiotic, money obsessed sex objects on Total Divas. WWE keeps telling us to watch the show and the fans see the Divas presented that way. No they shouldn't insult the Divas on national TV, but those ideas wouldn't be in the fans' heads if we didn't head the Bellas bragging about it all the time. If this keeps going it's a problem but I wouldn't worry at the moment.

Ryback offers to be Orton's partner, cementing the main event in stone.

Rusev squashed Goldust without Lana. This was just to get him back on

track.

In one of the worst choices for a main event they could have picked, Reigns/Orton/Ryback beat Big Show/Kane/Rollins when Reigns speared Kane. Having Reigns out there was fine, but who in the world thought putting Big Show and Kane in front of that crowd was a good idea? I mean.....WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT? With this crowd and just a year after the Shield turned face to end the show last time, they go with a six man that could have main evented any given Raw or even Smackdown? That's their big idea?

The show was a step down from last year but that's really not a fair comparison to make. You can't have a top level show every single year, especially when there's no Bryan title celebration to carry the show. Reigns is going to be fine long term but he needs to do something to get back on track. Beating up Kane and Big Show even more isn't that thing, but it seems like that's where we're going for the moment.

I like where things are going at the moment, but they're running the risk of getting repetitive with the main event matches. Orton vs. Rollins makes sense for Extreme Rules, but I'm really not sure where they can go for Rollins' next challenger. Reigns is going to be in there soon, but after those two I don't know where they're going.

There's more on here to like than not like, with stuff like Sheamus returning as a heel and Cena's upcoming open challenges are good things to see. They could build a lot off that and I'd love to see another NXT callup or two. Finally, Lesnar returning to eventually take down the Authority is going to blow the roof off the place. I can't wait to see where they go to challenge him, but it's going to be entertaining. Fun show this week but I'm hoping the crash back down to earth isn't a disaster.

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Reviewing the Review: Wrestlemania XXXI

This is a show where most fans just didn't want to see it. The interest wasn't there, but it had one good thing going for it: it's Wrestlemania. No matter what happens on the show, there's always something worth checking out. A few days before the show, I was talking about the card on the radio and the host said that it was a good card on paper and you would be looking forward to the show if you hadn't seen the build. That seemed more and more accurate as the show came closer. Let's get to it.

Before we get to the card, I want to cover some of the scenery. Above all else, that stage was HUGE. It was probably an easy forty yards long, making the wrestlers look tiny by comparison. That helped give the show the huge feel it was hoping for and the whole thing looked great. I know some people have complained about the sunlight but it really didn't bother me that much. I've seen shows outside where it was raining so hard that there were puddles in the ring so some sun isn't exactly a disaster.

The opening pre-show match was its usual fun, though I liked the elimination style from last year better. Jey Uso not being able to go hurt things a bit but having one less person might have been the best thing that could have happened in this mess. Also, it's not like he's some polar opposite from his brother. When I'm reviewing an Uso match I just pick one of their names and alternate whenever they tag. Does it really matter either way?

The match was a huge spotfest as you would expect and eventually lost all semblance of wrestling. Normally that would sound bad but it was exactly what it should have been here. The champs stood out more than anyone else and it's clear that no one cares about New Day and Los Matadores, but did

anyone not know that coming in? The champs retains after Cesaro stole a pin, which was exactly the ending they should have gone with.

The second match was the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal and Big Show won. Why you ask? Because apparently he's never won a battle royal and we're supposed to ignore World War 3 1996, the one he won on Smackdown in March of last year, the one he and Kofi co-won on Raw in 2011, the ECW vs. WWE Head to Head battle royal in 2006 and a battle royal he won on Nitro because this company doesn't know how to do research, which could include things like looking online or, I don't know, ASKING HIM IF HE'S EVER WON A BATTLE ROYAL.

Anyway, this was your old standard formula of having everyone brawl then have some people do a sequence to get eliminated. Mizdow got the big face turn against Miz, only to get thrown out by Big Show with ease. Yeah having Mizdow eliminate Big Show on his own would be a stretch, but having him win by eliminating Miz would have been a huge moment. Naturally we need Big Show to win his fourth battle royal because no one remembers the others. Oh and if you remember the story, he was the last man standing in the 2000 Royal Rumble but wasn't declared the winner.

Aside from Big Show and Mizdow, the only story was Hideo Itami from NXT. He didn't do much, but at least he was there and got to have a quick moment. It was probably better to have him in there instead of someone they're ready to push like Balor. Itami is just a kicking machine at this point but he's still decent enough for a spot like this. Not a fan of the match if you couldn't tell by three paragraphs about a battle royal.

Aloe Blacc sang America the Beautiful. Four things: Aloe Blacc sounds like a lotion and is a far cry from Aretha Franklin or Gladys Knight. Also, why is it almost always America the Beautiful and almost never the Star Spangled Banner? Either is fine but I've always wondered that. Finally, I'm out of touch with modern music and I don't seem to be missing anything.

The opening seven man ladder match was pretty much exactly what fans were expecting: a huge mess with almost no story to it and one big spot after another. It wasn't anything we haven't seen before and it probably would

have been better to have five people instead of seven but for an opening match, this was solid. I would have put this on later and not had it so soon after the other mess of the Tag Team Title match, but there was nothing much to complain about here.

As for the people in the match, they did just about what they were supposed to do. R-Truth and Stardust were just there (though Barrett breaking Stardust's glittery ladder was hilarious), Ziggler was the one that got close but couldn't pull it off, Ambrose got put through a ladder for the big spot (which was actually really smart because it wrote him off the show later so he couldn't stop the big ending), Barrett was fighting everyone, Harper was there for the power and that only leaves one guy.

Having Bryan win a title in the opening match was a good way to get the show off on the right foot. Aside from fighting for his fifth different title in five Wrestlemanias (US Title, World Heavyweight Title, Tag Team Titles, WWE World Heavyweight Title, Intercontinental Title), they had to throw the fans a bone to go from him having one of the coolest moments ever at Wrestlemania to opening the show the next year. Winning the Intercontinental Title is a step down, but at least it's Bryan getting back into the swing of things. Good stuff here and a solid opener, though it probably could have been trimmed down.

Things slow down a bit with the first singles match of the night as Randy Orton beat Seth Rollins. This was kind of a surprising result for me but it also telegraphed what was going to happen later in the night, ala Edge back in 2006. The RKO at the end with Seth being launched through the air was good, though I'll still take Evan Bourne's Shooting Star into an RKO for the best ever. Either way, Orton can nail that thing from almost anywhere and it never stops looking great.

However, this opens up some problems: we've seen these guys fight a few times now and we're supposed to pay to see them fight at Extreme Rules and potentially at a third show in May? The booking may be logical on paper, but I'm not sure it's going to get people to watch week after week. It was a good match, but I really liked what Wade Keller said about Orton on Austin's podcast this week: he's so naturally talented and has

been around so long that the expectations on him are very high. When he has a good match, it's almost considered a disappointment because he can be so naturally good when he's on his game.

Now we get to the match which is probably going to get the most controversy all night. This is where the great entrances began. First we had Sting coming out to a Japanese drum band, which was cool but kind of bizarre at the same time. I have no idea what kind of connection it's supposed to be, but I guess WWE just wanted Sting to have his own entrance that was unique for their show. The problem with this was Sting is always a high energy guy and the slow drum stuff didn't quite fit the top level show in the world.

Then HHH came out with an army of robots, in Terminator gear with Arnold Schwarzenegger himself doing a video introduction. It was at this point that you knew HHH was going to be the big star here and that this was really just a story with Sting involved instead of a story about Sting. The question here was what could Sting do after a few years off and all that time in TNA.

Amazingly enough he looked pretty solid. This was an old school style match with both guys working each other over and HHH working over the back to slow Sting down. This was a very nice change of pace after Orton and Rollins having the fast paced main event style and all the insanity that took place in the first three matches. It's the style they should have gone with and it worked fine.

Then seven people interfered, completely ignored wrestling history, made old people look old, having Kevin Nash do what I think was the funniest bit of the night, and then ending it with a hammer to the face. In case you didn't watch the show and are just reading this (for some strange reason), it was the Monday Night Wars all over again with DX running in first (with Sting DIVING OFF THE TOP ONTO ALL THREE OF THEM. Not bad at 56 years old) and then the NWO slowly hobbling in to counter them, all capped off by Shawn superkicking Sting.

Where do I even begin? Aside from the logical Shawn interference, this was one of the most ridiculous things I've seen in years. First and

foremost, Sting spent nearly two years fighting the NWO (or at least the Black and White) but now he's going to fight with them for the Monday Night Wars? A battle where his partners are the biggest WWF guy ever to that point and two guys who were the definition of hired mercenaries in the war and are fighting against one of their best friends? That's the best they've got?

It also caused us to see the New Age Outlaws and X-Pac on the same level as Hall, Nash and Hogan. Under no circumstances at any time in the history of professional wrestling does that hold up. Despite the fact that Billy Gunn is less than five years younger than Sting (no real connection to this, just find it kind of mind blowing), there is no way that these six guys are on the same level, even with Nash going down and holding his quad in a funny bit.

After all the insanity and ignoring continuity for the sake of the Monday Night Wars revival, Sting kicked out of the superkick (and out of the Pedigree earlier) and broke the sledgehammer, only to have the third Stinger Splash collide with the sledgehammer to give HHH the pin.

This is one of those moments where you sit at the screen, shake your head just a bit, then either sigh heavily or break a small appliance while screaming loudly. The fact that they brought Sting in and had him lose in his first match came off as one of the biggest wastes of time I've seen in years. It felt like they were closing the door on Sting, which is fine in theory, but they couldn't close it on a victory? It was such a mess that it wouldn't have been remotely clean so HHH doesn't lose face and the fans get to cheer.

Instead, it was one last (and by last I mean not last whatsoever) thumb of the large nose at WCW, which was entirely what this feud was based on, even after Sting said how ridiculous that would be. They even had the factions come out for the match, despite WCW going out of business FOURTEEN YEARS AGO. Is WWE really that insecure about a show on the air less than six years total that they have to dig it up and bury it one more time nearly fifteen years later? Apparently so, because that's exactly what they did.

Oh but we're not done. After the match, we got the big respect handshake. As I said in the original review: YOU HIT HIM IN THE FACE WITH A HAMMER AFTER COMING OUT WITH AN ARMY OF ROBOTS! NO HE DOES NOT WANT TO SHAKE YOUR HAND! This was supposed to be HHH saying he respected Sting after the battle. Keep this one in mind because we'll be coming back to it later.

I know I complained about it a lot, but this was one of the big song and dance numbers that you can only get at Wrestlemania and I had a blast watching it. The run-ins were incredibly fun (illogical but fun) and Sting looked like he did back in the best of his TNA years, which was a pretty good time for him. I was impressed with what he did on a wrestling front and the match was more entertaining than it had any right to be. No it didn't make sense and was a huge mess, but what else were you going to do with this match, especially with that ending?

Daniel Bryan celebrated with a bunch of former Intercontinental Champions for the Ron Simmons cameo. Jericho would have been a good addition here but what we got was fine.

Then we had a concert as all the NWO and DX guys try to figure out whose walker is whose. I still don't like these things as they waste so much time to give us songs we've heard a million times coming into the show, but hey, at least WWE can say this is an ENTERTAINMENT show instead of silly old wrestling. You know, because a seven minute concert totally changes the opinion of the show right?

The not so serious portion of the show continued with the Divas tag match between AJ Lee/Paige and the Bella Twins in what wound up being AJ's final match in WWE (for now). This match reenforced my issue with the Bellas all along: they're just not very good. Yeah they're watchable in the ring and have gotten WAY better in the last six to eight months, but there's a very thick line between good and watchable. They're combining to be the top of the division and that's just not going to cut it for a long term run at the top. AJ made Nikki tap in a short match after spending a lot of time on the floor.

I tried to like this match and it was better than most Raw matches you

would see, but it didn't work as the big Wrestlemania match for them. The Bellas are good at getting heel heat and playing the stuck up better than you villains, but they simply cannot back it up in the ring. It's like they're following a tightly written script for the match and would be lost if anything went against that plan. That's a sign of a sub-par worker and the Bellas fill that role like Nikki fills out those shorts.

In theory this was to set up AJ vs. Nikki for the title, but why couldn't that be taking place at Wrestlemania? I complained about this leading up to the show and it still didn't make sense here. Having this just be a tag match after a couple of title matches were used to set it up was totally backwards thinking and never held up. The wrestling was ok, but the Bellas are just killing this division every day they have the title. It's like the life is being drained out of the division, much like HHH's World Title reign in 2003: the matches aren't bad but you roll your eyes when the title is retained and beg for ANYONE to give you a break.

The Hall of Fame did their thing. This was what it was and I always like seeing them out there and hearing the Fink's voice. It felt faster this year, but there's nothing wrong with taking five minutes out of a four hour card to let these people salute the crowd on the grand stage one more time.

Now we get to one of the bigger matches as Rusev defended the US Title against John Cena. In what might have been the entrance of the night, Rusev came out in a tank. I mean a full sized let's go blow a hole in a building tank with Lana surrounded by Russian soldiers carrying the belt. I know Cena's entrances are well known at Wrestlemania, but he's going to have his hands full topping this.

Cena had a big speech with videos from American Presidents and shots of the military as we heard about how great this country is. Then Cena just walked to the ring as usual for a pretty anticlimactic ending. It was cool, but it needed something more than just Cena coming down the long aisle. I mean....RUSEV WAS IN A TANK! Side note: the next night on Raw and then on Smackdown, the announcers started using The Russian Tank as a nickname for Rusev. I dig it.

The match...not so much. It was still good and an entertaining match with Cena finally breaking the Accolade and pinning Rusev to win the title, but it was just kind of there. I still liked it and Cena brought the goods (including a springboard Stunner, which should be someone's finisher again minus the springboard) as he always does. This isn't a loss where Rusev is never going to recover as every monster built up like him has to lose eventually.

It's good and Rusev has already won his big match over Cena, but the ending hurt things. The story for this match had been built around submissions but Cena just sidestepped Rusev so he could hit Lana and nailed the AA for the pin. I mean...that's it? It's a good match and the ending had to be Cena winning (though imagine the promos Rusev could cut if he escaped with the belt), but the ending was a bit flat for me. At least this way they avoid the ultra repetitive YOU TAPPED OUT chants.

Now we get to the long time filler as the show had two matches to fill in about 80 minutes at this point. HHH and Stephanie came out to brag about owning the company, roughly an hour after HHH was all humble and shook Sting's hand, making that whole thing even more stupid. I'm still kind of annoyed at that six days after the show.

Anyway, they talked about how they own the people and everyone here and you knew this was going to bring out the Rock. He did his long entrance and catchphrases, only to have Stephanie do her usual schtick as she ripped him apart and made him look like any given guy on the roster. She went one step too far though and slapped Rock in the face, so Rock bailed to the floor...and walked over to Ronda Rousey.

Now THIS was a worthy use of a celebrity as Rousey is one of the biggest stars in sports right now (and ignore the fact that I have a thing for her) and fits this story perfectly. As you would expect, Stephanie ran her mouth and got her arm cranked. By cranked I mean slightly tugged on instead of being put in a full on armbar, but I'm assuming Ronda is only allowed to get so physical outside of UFC. That's fine. Disappointing, but fine.

My guess is this sets up HHH vs. Rock with the girls as seconds, because

even though Stephanie is a great talker, I don't think anyone is going to buy her lasting more than five seconds against Rousey. Real trained fighters can barely break fifteen seconds against Rousey but we're supposed to buy Stephanie as having the slightest bit of a chance against her? Because it's in a wrestling ring? I'm not buying that, and this is assuming Rousey would ever be allowed to work a match in the first place. Rock vs. HHH is an established feud and seeing them go at it one more time would be fun.

It mostly worked, except for one problem: IT TOOK NEARLY HALF AN HOUR. This was one of the longest talking segments I've seen in a long time and a lot of it is due to Stephanie and Rock taking forever to get to the point. Now once Ronda was introduced it was fine as everyone was begging for her to, as Rock put it, reach down Stephanie's throat and play jump rope with her Fallopian tubes", but sweet goodness they could have cut five to ten minutes of this and done the exact same thing. But then we wouldn't have been able to hear about Stephanie being Andre's friend again, because....why do we need to hear that anyway?

The segment ran long enough that we didn't have time to recap Bray Wyatt and Undertaker starting small fires to set up their match. The interesting thing here was Bray wrenching his ankle very badly before the show and barely being able to walk. However, he gutted it out and managed to hold up his half of the match. That brought us to the big question: how was Undertaker going to do?

Actually quite well, as it really seems the concussion played a huge role in how bad the match against Lesnar was last year. Undertaker wasn't at the HBK level, but he was more than fine for a match like this. He's also grown some hair back to make him look like Biker Taker, which isn't my favorite look but is miles better than the bald version, which just makes him look old. I don't really need to see Undertaker again, but it was good to see that he still had something in the tank after last year's mess.

I have to give a quick bit of praise to Bray's entrance, which saw a bunch of scarecrows come to life as he walked past them, turning them into his henchmen. It makes no sense but looked awesome, which brings me

to something I've been meaning to talk about recently. A criticism I've been hearing lately is that Bray's promos don't make a ton of sense. I want to tilt my head at these people and ask them what is wrong with their heads.

Look at Bray Wyatt. He's a backwoods cult leader who worships a spirit named Sister Abigail, who told him that he would save the world one day. Why in the name of all that is good and holy would you expect him to give a logical promo? The whole point of the character is that he sounds bizarre and only makes sense to those people crazy enough to follow him.

Undertaker talked about spirits, Ultimate Warrior talked about loading spaceships with rocket fuel and Hulk Hogan talked about dog paddling Donald Trump to safety when an earthquake caused New Jersey to fall into the ocean. Bray Wyatt's promos are closer to Nick Bockwinkel's than the work of a lot of people praised for their speaking abilities, but people complain that he doesn't make sense.

Of course they don't make sense and he'd be failing if they did. He looks and sounds mysterious and you're supposed to wonder what he means. It makes just enough sense for you to follow it, but the details aren't all there and that's why they work. Yeah he gets repetitive at times, but criticizing him for not making sense is an unfair complaint.

All of that brings us to the big main event, which doesn't have as much to talk about. It was basically Lesnar vs. Cena all over again with Lesnar destroying the challenger and shrugging off his best shots until he made a mistake and let Reigns stay in it, only to have Rollins cash in Money in the Bank and pin Reigns to win the title.

The match itself was fun, but they were running the risk of making Lesnar repetitive. Don't get me wrong: it's still entertaining to see him be all freaky strong (even though he has some thin legs, at least compared to how huge his upper body is), but they can only do this for so long before it loses some of its impact. I liked that they had Reigns making a comeback near the end and you weren't quite sure if he could pull it off, but if they had him survive and win, I would have been scared to show up at Raw the next night. The booing would have been too much for that hair

to handle.

Another point here is the blood, which did a lot of good for the match. It's something you don't need to see that often, but it's good in spots like this one. Quick note here: there's a video going around that allegedly shows the referee passing the blade to Reigns. That's actually the referee checking on Reigns, who squeezes his hand to show he's fine. It's an old technique and not passing a blade.

Rollins cashing in was a good way to end things, but unfortunately it's going to lead to some repetitive title matches for the next few months, unless they go with some triple threats. Rollins deserves the title though and that's the important thing to get done. I certainly like the cash in and it kept them from having to pick from a short list of bad possible endings. It's a great ending to a great show.

Yes this was a great show and I had an awesome time with the whole thing. I don't know how well it holds up over time with the lack of a bad build and low expectations in the future, but as it stood it was an outstanding show without a really bad match on the card. There are some issues (Sting losing, time getting crunched because of the talking segment going long) but overall, this blew away my expectations and I had a lot of fun watching it. How long has it been since we had two great Wrestlemanias in a row? Seven years or so? However long it's been, the answer is too long so it was great seeing another classic.

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Smackdown – April 2, 2015: So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen Wrestlemania

Smackdown

Date: April 2, 2015

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

It was nice while it lasted but this is the final part of the big Wrestlemania week. Tonight is likely going to be the last major shows for now as Smackdown will go back to being the supplemental show it's been for years. There isn't much in the way of fallout tonight either as Raw ended without a huge bang. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Rollins and company for a chat. Rollins loves it when a plan works out, like when he cashed in Money in the Bank this past Sunday to become WWE World Heavyweight Champion. Now he's living a new life and doing things like flying across the country to be on the Today Show, then flying back across the country to face Brock Lesnar. That gave him some serious jet lag though and it wasn't time for Lesnar to get his rematch. If Lesnar hadn't lost his head, maybe he could have had that title shot here tonight.

Cue Randy Orton, who says he remembers everything over the last few months. He played the Authority like a fiddle (a very stupid fiddle) before he got to rip Rollins' head off with an RKO at Wrestlemania. More importantly though, he's owed a rematch for the WWE from last year's Wrestlemania and doesn't like how that belt looks around Rollins' waist. Seth wants to know why Randy is dwelling in the past, because he is the future.

Only Rollins gets to decide when the title is defended, which makes Orton insult the Stooges, Big Show and Kane for some reason. At least Big Show

won at Wrestlemania while Kane wasn't even there (he was in the battle royal). What does the Director of Operations do anyway? The way Orton sees it, Kane has gone from the big red monster to Big Red Riding Hood. Kane makes Orton vs. Big Show and offers Orton a potential title shot if he can win.

Big Show vs. Randy Orton

Orton quickly gets shouldered down but avoids an elbow drop. Show tries to get to the apron but winds up getting pulled into the elevated DDT. Cue the Stooges to break up an RKO attempt for the DQ at 1:19.

Everyone comes in but Randy fights back at Rollins, only to get chokeslammed by Kane. Ryback runs out for the save and it's RKO's all around.

We recap Bryan vs. Ziggler from Raw and Sheamus returning after the match. Who in the world thought that hair would be called anything but stupid? I mean, they had to know that reaction was coming right?

Sheamus vs. Bryan tonight, because they can't keep the matches they set up on Monday straight for twenty four hours.

Natalya vs. Naomi

The Bellas are on commentary. Naomi's inset interview says she can beat Nikki and win the title but she'll prove herself until she gets a shot. Feeling out process to start with both girls missing dropkicks but nipping up at the same time. That's rather impressive in Natalya's full body outfit. Natalya puts her down for the step on the back into the basement dropkick for two as the Bellas question Naomi's heart. We hit an abdominal stretch for a bit before Naomi is sent to the apron for a kick to Natalya's head. She puts Natalya in a headscissors but drives her head first into the mat instead of flipping her over for the pin at 2:20.

Rollins apologizes to Kane for the RKO but Kane likes the sound of Orton challenging for the title at Extreme Rules. Seth tries to talk him out of it but stops to comment on the smell of the office. He leaves and we hear a toilet flush and Ambrose walks in. Harper vs. Ambrose later tonight

because of the use of a bathroom. Seriously.

We get a sitdown interview with Roman Reigns, who talks about how hard it was to step in the ring with the Beast. He proved he was willing to take a beating and showed he could get up after a bunch of suplexes. Reigns talks about Suplex City but he survived the wave from Lesnar. He's thinking about buying a condo in Suplex City because Lesnar wasn't ready for him. Brock didn't have an answer for all the Superman Punches and they changed his appearance permanently.

The fight changed both of their lives and he'd love to do it again. Saxton asks about Rollins cashing in and Reigns says it crushed him. He was on top of the mountain and Rollins took it away when Reigns was so close. Thirty more seconds and a spear would have won him the World Title. He's beaten Rollins before so he can, he has and he will beat him again. I liked this more than any other interview I've heard from Reigns in a long time as it makes him much easier to relate to now that he's been humbled a bit. Good interview.

Miz vs. R-Truth

Truth raps to the ring. I don't remember him doing that for the last few weeks. The first ten seconds are spent with Miz taking off his sunglasses and the second ten seconds are spent on WE WANT MIZDOW chants. Truth shoves Miz off a headlock and hits the Lie Detector. The ax kick misses though and the Skull Crushing Finale is good for the pin at 1:22. Welcome back to Jobber Town Truth.

Mizdow runs out for a Skull Crushing Finale on Miz and puts on the sunglasses.

Here's John Cena to one of the loudest positive reactions I've seen for him in a long time (yeah I know it's Smackdown). Cena talks about how hard Rusev fought to stay undefeated for a year but seeing Rusev as the US Champion made him sick. It wasn't due to being Russian, but because of all the things Rusev said about America. The interesting thing is that Rusev was the American dream: he showed up and fought to become everything he wanted to be, but then he thought America sucked. "WELL AMERICA DOESN'T SUCK!"

From now on, this US Title represents opportunity. Cena says bring him your outcasts, your future stars or anyone that the Authority says is a B+ player. He'll fight anyone from Brock Lesnar to the Bushwhackers (hey now, they're Hall of Famers) because every Monday night, there's going to be an open challenge for the US Title. Now THAT is the best news that has happened for the title in a long time.

Cue Rusev and Lana, the latter of whom sounds like she's lost a bit of her accent. She says Cena is half the man Rusev is because this is Rusev's world. Rusev cuts her off by reaching out his hand for the microphone. With a glare at Lana, he says he didn't lose at Wrestlemania so he's still America's champion.

In Rusev's world, people like Cena have opportunities as well: surrender the title or be crushed at Extreme Rules. Cena thinks Rusev is drunk but if the Russian wants a fight, Cena isn't going anywhere. Rusev wants to wait for Extreme Rules and calls for the flag drop but nothing happens. Instead Cena points and the American flag drops. I'm kind of stunned it took that long to do that. Cena agrees to the match at Extreme Rules. The announcers keep pushing Rusev as the Russian Tank, which isn't a bad name for him.

We look at Sheamus attacking Bryan again. The tag match is off due to Zigler being too banged up to compete. And they didn't know that when they announced the tag match?

Luke Harper vs. Dean Ambrose

No entrance for Harper. Dean goes right after him in the corner and a middle rope elbow to the jaw. A basement clothesline gets two so Harper just hits him in the throat to take over. It turns into a slugout (shocking I know) until Luke catches a cross body and throws him over the top as we take a break. Back with Dean's suicide dive being caught so he nails a clothesline on the floor.

The top rope standing elbow gets two but Luke kicks his head off to take over again. Dean escapes the powerbomb and low bridges Harper to the floor. Luke quickly sends him into the timekeeper's area and loads up the table but Dean dives off the apron with a clothesline. He can't powerbomb

Luke through the table though so Luke shows him how it's done. The bell doesn't ring but I'm assuming it was a DQ win for Dean (or a double countout) at about 8:00.

Rating: C. Nice back and forth brawl here with both guys hitting each other really hard. Harper is great in the old Kane role from about 2004 as the midcard monster and Ambrose is fine as the guy who keeps getting beaten up and coming back for more. If nothing else it's nice to have a match be long enough to rate.

The Prime Time Players make fun of the New Day, with Titus spraying himself with water and shouting about FEELING THE POWER. Big E. sounds like he has a possum stuck in his throat, Kofi has a weird looking chest and Woods has bad hair. They do the New Day chant and crickets can be heard. If nothing else, I love the Prime Time Players shirts based on the old Prime Time Wrestling logo.

Sheamus vs. Daniel Bryan

Non-title. Sheamus has new music with a slower pace and no lyrics. After seeing the "I'm back" line for the third time tonight, the fans tell Sheamus that he looks stupid. Sheamus encourages them and says he doesn't see any real men around here. All the fan favorites are too vertically challenged and he's going to crush all the underdogs. So he's Batista from last year? Barrett is on commentary.

Sheamus shoves him into the corner to start and shrugs off Bryan's kick to the ribs. Bryan has some more success with the leg but Sheamus drops him with a clothesline. As Sheamus fires off uppercuts, Barrett says he never lost the title and is owed a rematch. That makes Rock, Orton, Bryan, Rusev and Barrett who are owed automatic rematches. It's almost like they're completely overusing a plot device.

Bryan scores with some kicks to send Sheamus outside but he comes back in for an Irish Curse to send Bryan to the floor as well. We come back from a break with Sheamus loading up a suplex but flipping Bryan over instead of going down with him. You might remember that as the Crash Landing from the final month of WCW. Sheamus: "ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED???"

Bryan tries some forearms to no avail and gets thrown hard into the corner. Some posing allows Bryan to get a breather though and he moonsaults over Sheamus before dropping him with the running clothesline. A backdrop sends Sheamus to the floor for the Flying Goat. The missile dropkick and it's time for the YES Kicks. As usual the big one misses but Sheamus can't hit White Noise.

Bryan sends him into the buckle and kicks the ropes to knock Sheamus back, only to get crotched on the top. The ten forearms are broken up as Bryan grabs Sheamus' arm. Why did no one ever think of that before? Sheamus knocks him to the floor and onto the announcers' table, busting Bryan open. Barrett hits a Bull Hammer behind the referee's back for a countout at 15:33.

Rating: C+. This wasn't as good as I was expecting as Sheamus is still working the kinks out of his new character. He isn't doing much besides big power moves, but at least he's getting on the crowd's nerves like he should be. Bryan was doing his usual stuff as well, but the match just never got going like you would expect it to.

Overall Rating: C-. Well it was nice while it lasted but everything is back to normal in WWE. There wasn't much to see here other than the announcement of a B level pay per view main event and another rematch from Wrestlemania. The show wasn't terrible, but it really falls off a cliff after the hot shows earlier in the week.

Results

Randy Orton b. Big Show via DQ when Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble interfered

Naomi b. Natalya – Headscissors driver

Miz b. R-Truth – Skull Crushing Finale

Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper via DQ when Harper powerbombed him through a table

Sheamus b. Daniel Bryan via countout

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Monday Night Raw – March 30, 2015: Title This Whatever Mr. Lesnar Prefers It To Be Called

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 30, 2015

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

Things have certainly changed last night as we have a new WWE World Champion in Seth Rollins, who cashed in his Money in the Bank contract and made the main event a triple threat, allowing him to pin Reigns and win the title. Tonight is always one of the most eventful nights of the year and it's always interesting to see where things go from here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence with no recap from last night.

Here are a livid Heyman and Lesnar, with the beast in his fighting gear and cuts on his face. Something I noticed last night: for a guy as terrifying as he looks, Brock Lesnar has some skinny legs. Heyman says

he's the advocate for the most non-PG killer of the PG Era. Last night Brock laid a beating on Roman Reigns, just like they promised they would. Heyman's voice sounds like it's about to go out. He talks about all the suplexes and has to stop for the Suplex City chant.

Last night, Reigns almost gained Lesnar's respect but the kid still has a long way to go. Lesnar got bored last night and wanted to go to dinner, so he hit the fourth F5, but here came Seth Rollins (big reaction for that). Seth came out and stole the title by pinning the challenger instead of the champion. Heyman talks about his father being a prominent New York attorney and says he can have the decision reversed in court with the title being held up, but Brock thinks all lawyers are scumbags. He doesn't want litigation, because he wants his rematch clause.

That rematch will not happen at Summerslam, Wrestlemania XXXII, Extreme Rules or Payback, but it's being invoked RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW. Cue Stephanie and she's as popular as John Cena was in New Orleans last year. She praises Brock for a great main event but the fans chant for Ronda Rousey as Stephanie's arm is held close to her ribs.

The fans won't get what they want if they make her angry and they calm down. Rollins got on a plane to go to New York for the Today Show and he's not here yet. Once he gets here though, he'll be up for the challenge. Heyman says Lesnar wrestles live tonight on Raw for the first time in over ten years. Tonight there's going to be a new World Champion.

John Cena has issued an open challenge for the US Title and Daniel Bryan is defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler.

Intercontinental Title: Daniel Bryan vs. Dolph Ziggler

Bryan won the title last night in a ladder match and both guys get jobber entrances here. Ziggler has a new jean jacket vest and Barrett is on commentary. Feeling out process to start as the fans are split. Bryan cranks on the arm as Barrett talks about getting the title back when it's convenient for him.

Daniel wrestles him to the mat for some hard forearms but Ziggler changes control and hammers away, only to get kicked in the face to break it up.

This is starting to get physical. They head into the corner with Bryan firing off some kicks and a hard forearm to the face, setting up the surfboard. Back up and Ziggler fires off a cross body to put both guys on the floor as we take a break. We come back to Bryan fighting out of a chinlock and hitting the running dropkicks in the corner. Those things just look good.

Both guys crotch themselves on top and Bryan nails a belly to back superplex for two. The YES Kicks look to set up the YES Lock but Ziggler counters into a pinfall reversal sequence, followed by sending Bryan shoulder first into the post. The running knee is countered by a superkick for two and the fans give them a standing ovation. It was good but a standing ovation? Really? They slug it out from their knees before turning to headbutts, only to have Bryan get knocked backed and come back with the running knee to retain at 11:53.

Rating: B-. Good match but a standing ovation? I'm fine if this is the kind of match we'll be getting in the future but I really need more long term proof before I believe the title is back to meaning something. Bryan winning his first title defense is a good sign and it's nice to see a match not getting interrupted for a change.

Post match Barrett goes after Bryan but Sheamus, with a mohawk and a braided beard, runs out for the save. Barrett leaves but Sheamus Brogue Kicks Bryan and White Noise to Ziggler. Fans: "YOU LOOK STUPID!" Oh that's an understatement. Sheamus: "I'm back."

Seth Rollins has arrived.

We recap the Hall of Fame inductions.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Ascension vs. New Day/Lucha Dragons

Woods is the odd man out here. We have our first NXT callup of the night with the Lucha Dragons of Sin Cara and Kalisto. The fans of course chant NXT as Cara and Cesaro get things going with the fans switching to Cesaro. He takes Cara down to start but gets caught in La Mistica for two. Off to Kalisto for some kicks at the arm before a HUGE backflip into a multi-spin headscissors, sending Cesaro out to the floor.

Big E. comes in to a “New Day sucks” chant as he gets to face Konnor. Kofi quickly tags in for a middle rope clothesline before it’s already back to Cara to work on the arm. Ascension gets their act together and slams Cara down as we take a break. Back with Cesaro swinging Cara into the dropkick from Kidd but Cara is able to dive over for the hot tag to Kofi. House is cleaned but the fans still hate the New Day.

The Boom Drop and a spinning cross body get two as the announcers acknowledge the chants. Kidd throws Kofi into a European uppercut but Viktor tags himself in. The real hot tag brings in Kalisto to clean house with a rolling kick to Viktor’s face and a headscissors faceplant. Everything breaks down with Big E. belly to belly suplexing everyone he sees. Cara backdrops Kofi onto the champs and Konnor, setting up Salida Del Sol on Viktor for the pin at 10:08. Booker: “We may have to get every talent from NXT on this roster right now!”

Rating: C+. Total star making performance from Kalisto as he was flying all over the place and making everyone forget Rey Mysterio ever existed. I wish Ascension hadn’t been crushed so much but it’s nice to see the Dragons still having their number as they’re both on the main roster. Hopefully this is just the first of a few debuts tonight.

Heyman tells Lesnar that he’s here.

Video on Neville (no Adrian) but no date for his debut.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

The belt looks huge on Rollins. We get big match intros and Rollins goes over to get in front of Brock as he holds up the title. Seth doesn’t hand over the title and the opening bell never rings. Instead he drops to the floor and says he’s too jetlagged. Plus he has a sore foot from Curb Stomping Lesnar last night so the rematch isn’t happening tonight.

Lesnar goes after him and throws Rollins down before blasting him with a clothesline. They get inside but Rollins flips out of the German suplex. The kick to the face just ticks Brock off though so Rollins tries to bail again, only to get caught in the F5. The Stooges’ save doesn’t work as they get clotheslined and send Rollins running to the crowd. No match as

the bell never rang.

Brock throws the announcers' table over to crush all three of them and beats up the Stooges as a consolation prize and F5's Cole to a huge reaction. Heyman thinks Brock has gone too far so Brock takes out a cameraman until Stephanie comes out to tell him to stop (her arm seemingly fine already) but Brock hits another F5. That earns him a suspension and he's out of the building. Brock F5's the cameraman one more time and finally leaves.

Back with a replay of Lesnar's rampage and still no commentary. Stephanie says she'll fine Brock because he's signed long term so she owns him.

Stardust vs. Damien Mizdow

Byron Saxton is a one man booth now and the table still overturned. Mizdow comes out to the same entrance and music he had with Miz but alone this time. Stardust jumps him to start but Mizdow explodes with a clothesline out of the corner and hits the Reality Check. That's fine with Stardust who hits a release gordbuster and cranks on a cravate, only to get annoyed at the CODY chants. Back up and a Skull Crushing Finale is good enough to give Mizdow the pin at 2:24.

Miz runs in and hits the Finale on Mizdow before talking a lot of trash.

Video on how Wrestlemania took over the Bay Area and the media appearances last week.

Curtis Axel says the entire roster is jealous of Axelmania. It took 29 men to eliminate him from the battle royal, but the road to Axtreme Rules stars right now.

Neville vs. Curtis Axel

Neville now has a hooded cape and is billed as the Man That Gravity Forgot. Axel goes right for him before the bell and gets a HUGE springboard moonsault to the floor. Back in and we get the opening bell as Neville starts speeding things way up with the front flips and some running forearms. Kicks to the ribs and a running kick to the face set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 1:13. Total squash.

We recap Lesnar attacking the announcers.

Here's John Cena for an open challenge for the US Title. The fans chant John Cena Sucks in time with the music so Cena does the entrance twice with a smirk on his face. Cena says you're going to hear about Wrestlemania moments all night but stops to praise the crowd for being so vocal. He mentions them singing and the fans strike up the band again. That means the fans aren't going to like this: THE CHAMP IS HERE! The challenge is open so come get some.

US Title: John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

Oh now that's a surprise. Saxton thought it would be Rusev and even said his name before Dean came out. Ambrose gets taken down with a headlock to start as the fans are all over Cena. Back up and Dean hiptosses him down for one and Cena bails outside as we take a break. We come back with Dean fighting out of a chinlock and Jerry Lawler joining Saxton on commentary. Cena slams Dean down but a kick to the face breaks up the Shuffle. A big boot sets up the rebound clothesline but Cena ducks into the ProtoBomb.

Now the Shuffle connects but the AA is countered into a sunset flip for two. The second attempt at the rebound clothesline gets two and a tornado DDT gets the same on Cena. The champ bails outside and gets taken down by the top rope standing elbow (that's still cool looking). Back in and a quick AA gets two and a nice reaction from the crowd on the kickout. A top rope AA is countered as Dean hammers away, only to botch a sunset bomb. Instead it's a Batista Bomb but Cena rolls out and puts on the STF but Dean makes the long crawl to the ropes.

Another AA is countered into the STF on Cena with John's face being far more shocked than in pain. Dean lets go as Cena is getting close to the ropes and another AA is countered into Dirty Deeds for two. This is getting good with the drama and near falls. Cena wins a slugout and they trade finisher counters until Dean hits a cross body, only to have Cena rolls through into an AA for the pin at 14:23.

Rating: B. This took its time to get going but once they started trading finishers you actually believed Ambrose could pull off the upset. It's a good sign that he's in a match like this after all those big losses in

recent months. He's still way over and that's more important than any win or loss he can have.

Post match Cena stands over Dean, who is shaking his head. They slap hands and there's no heel turn.

Stills of last night's main event.

Rollins says he earned the right to cash in at any time and that's exactly what he did last night, when no one expected it. Let's forget about Lesnar, because he walked out of Wrestlemania as the new World Heavyweight Champion. Orton comes up and says he wants the title, so here are Kane and Big Show to stand behind Rollins. Seth gives Randy until the end of the night to find two partners.

AJ Lee/Paige/Naomi vs. Bella Twins/Natalya

AJ is wearing a Bayley shirt. Natalya headlocks Naomi down to start before firing off some forearms. Naomi comes back with a running dropkick, only to have Natalya take her down for a basement dropkick. Off to Brie for the third dropkick of the match as the fans want Bayley. Brie takes her down with a fireman's carry into an armbar, followed by taking her down with a fireman's carry into an armbar. Back up and the tag brings in Paige for some headbutts. Brie calls her a loser and gets speared to the floor as we take a break. IN THIS MATCH???

Back with Brie holding AJ in a chinlock before it's off to Natalya for some suplexes for two. Nikki puts on a chinlock of her own and keeps AJ from diving over for the tag. A hard forearm puts Paige down and we keep the match going with a modified Indian deathlock. AJ finally gets free and sends Nikki into the buckle for the hot tag to Naomi. Nikki plants her with an Alabama Slam but Paige comes in as everything breaks down. Bella miscommunication sees Nikki hit Brie by mistake, setting up the Rear View to pin Nikki at 13:35.

Rating: C. This was a good example of the problem with the Divas: most of them have a horrible lack of presence. The Bellas are really bad about this. They're good at doing heel stuff, but the charisma isn't there and they feel like they're just playing characters. Yeah they're playing

those characters well enough, but I don't buy it as anything more than them doing what they're told to do. Natalya can have that presence, or at least can be good enough in the ring to make up for it. I don't buy that from the Bellas and I never have. Hopefully this leads to Naomi getting a title run.

We look at Lesnar's destruction again.

Ryback offers to be Orton's partner and Randy shakes his hand.

Sheamus/Barrett vs. Bryan/Ziggler on Smackdown. Cena, Orton and Reigns will be there in some capacity as well.

Rusev vs. Goldust

No Lana or tank tonight. The announcers bring up Rusev not answering the open challenge earlier if he's here. Cole might need neck surgery after the attack earlier. That sounds like a way to write him off TV for a bit. Rusev catches Goldust coming out of the corner and the beating is on early. Some slow stomps set up a knee to the back of the head The jumping superkick and the Accolade end Goldust quick at 2:16.

Ryback/Randy Orton/??? vs. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins

In a very obvious choice, the third man is Roman Reigns. Kane and Ryback get things going with Ryback shrugging off some right hands and hitting the spinebuster. An early Meat Hook attempt sends the Authority to the floor but Reigns dives on all three of them for a huge crash (beating from Brock Lesnar anyone?) as we take a break. Back with Kane getting stomped in the corner before Ryback suplexes him for two. Off to Rollins vs. Orton with the new champ getting uppercutted in the corner. A spinning kick to the face gets two on Randy as the fans chant HOW YOU DOIN.

Big Show comes in and gets a PLEASE RETIRE chant. Back to Kane for a chinlock followed by a big boot for two. The Wave breaks out and the camera actually follows it around. Rollins tells the crowd to suck it but Orton counters what looked to be a tornado DDT into a superplex. Fans: "WE ARE AWESOME!"

The hot tag brings in Reigns and he's booed out of the building as he cleans house. In a cool spot, Big Show intercepts a Superman Punch (fans LOVE that) and throws Reigns at Kane, only to have the Superman Punch connect out of midair. Ryback picks Big Show up in a dead lift for the Shell Shock but eats a Curb Stomp. Rollins bails from Reigns and the RKO into a spear is enough to pin Kane at 13:00.

Rating: C-. This was the match where the crowd gave up and I can't say I blame them. Of all the people they can put in the main event of THIS SHOW, they picked the two old giants? That was the best idea they had? This felt like the end of any given Raw and that's not how you want to end this show. Last year it ended with Shield's face turn, here it ends with a generic six man tag. That's kind of stupid but the rest of the show was good enough that I can forgive it.

Overall Rating: B+. I had a good time with this show and they focused a lot more on the wrestling this year than last. The show completely ran out of gas with the main event as it went out with nothing instead of something big, but at least we had some good debuts, Lesnar just massacring people and a hot crowd. Stephanie continues to be the most annoying person on the roster but that's something you just have to live with. Also, no HHH? Still though, really fun show which has become the standard for the night after Wrestlemania.

Results

Daniel Bryan b. Dolph Ziggler – Running knee

New Day/Lucha Dragons b. Ascension/Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Salida Del Sol to Viktor

Damien Mizdow b. Stardust – Skull Crushing Finale

Neville b. Curtis Axel – Red Arrow

John Cena b. Dean Ambrose – Attitude Adjustment

Paige/AJ Lee/Naomi b. Bella Twins/Natalya – Rear View to Nikki

Rusev b. Goldust – Accolade

Roman Reigns/Randy Orton/Ryback b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Spear to Kane

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Wrestlemania XXXI Preview: Pre-Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

This one didn't take long.

This is on the pre-show this year and I can't say I'm surprised. The other day I saw someone say that this is just the same battle royal they had on the pre-show for years and he was exactly right. Yeah last year's was cool with Hogan endorsing it and Cesaro getting what should have been the star of a major push for him, but instead it would up being the catch all match for the people that couldn't get on the show anywhere else.

I won't bother listing off everyone in the match (only twenty this year, as it probably should be) but here are the names that matter: Miz, Mizdow, Kane, Big Show, Ryback, Mark Henry. Other than that everyone is a jobber or Hideo Itami making his main roster debut. The interesting thing is there's no spot for Sheamus, who I would have had winning the thing. However, now that he's not an option, it makes for a more wide open (or as wide as you can get with six guys as potential winners) field.

The only really interesting story for anyone in the match is between Miz and Mizdow, but the problem with FINALLY turning Mizdow here is if he doesn't win, what difference does it make? Unfortunately I have no faith in the writers to realize this so I don't think Miz or Mizdow goes over here.

Kane, Big Show and Mark Henry.....just no. Henry would be the best choice of the three and I think I've covered why I never want to see Big Show or Kane win a match again as long as they live. None of these guys need to win this though and there's no point in putting any of them over the younger guys. Let someone look good in eliminating them and leave it at that.

That brings us to the two people I could see winning. First and foremost, I really don't think Itami gets it. He comes off more like an entrant to put in there so they don't have to put Neville or Balor in the match and have them lose before their callups in the very near future. Itami will probably get a kicking demonstration, but he isn't going to make it to the final three.

Therefore, I'm going with Ryback. He's been on a pretty good roll lately and they seem somewhat serious about making him into a big guy (see what I did there?) again. It doesn't help that I'm still a fan of the guy and would like to see him get as close back to where he was before the WE HAVE TO KEEP THE TITLE ON PUNK BECAUSE WE BOOK THINGS SEVEN MONTHS IN ADVANCE NOW booking cut his legs off. Something tells me I'm wrong on this, but it's more what I want to see than anything else.

Keep in mind that my pick instantly changes to Sheamus should he be in it, which wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. What would however be the worst thing in the world is if they don't do SOMETHING with Curtis Axel in this. I know he won't and shouldn't win, but have him do something to play up all the responses he's gotten since the Rumble. You have something there, so run with it, even if it's just a short sprint.

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Smackdown – March 26, 2015: Ladies' Night

Smackdown

Date: March 26, 2015

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 17,540

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

It's the final show before the big one and that means we're in for a very different kind of Smackdown. This is likely to be a studio heavy show with a lot of video packages, but it's not like Smackdown means much in the first place. The main event is a big eight man tag with most of the people in some of the bigger matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jimmy Uso vs. Cesaro vs. Fernando vs. Big E.

One fall to a finish and no tags. It's a big brawl to start with Jimmy hitting the running Umaga attack on Cesaro but Big E. suplexes Jimmy and Fernando down. Big E. keeps going by throwing them all into the same corner and driving in shoulders. Fernando is left alone with Big E and the Warrior Splash gets two. Jimmy comes back in to kick Big E. in the head and Fernando hits a big dive to take out E. and Cesaro. That's not enough for Jimmy as he dives on all three for a huge crash.

Back in and Cesaro loads up the apron superplex on Fernando but Jimmy gets in to help him, only to have Big E. German suplex both guys to put

all four down in something like a Tower of Doom. Cool stuff indeed. Cesaro and Fernando gets back up with the masked man diving into the Swing. A Backstabber breaks up the Neutralizer but Jimmy kicks Big E. down, allowing E. to hit the Big Ending on Cesaro. Jimmy nails the Superfly Splash on Cesaro for the pin at 4:53. Well that was....short.

Rating: C. Total insanity here with nothing resembling structure. That being said, what else can you ask for in a match like this? The fourway match on Sunday is going to be nothing but a big spotfest so why not just have the half sized version here? That Tower of Doom was cool stuff though and one big spot is more than enough in a five minute match.

We go live to Axxess with Byron Saxton and Renee Young. After talking about all the autographs that will be signed there, we go to a clip from ESPN on Monday where Brock Lesnar officially announced that he re-signed with WWE.

Long video on Reigns vs. Lesnar with Reigns saying he has to rise to the occasion and beat his biggest test.

Another video on the Intercontinental Title ladder match but with a different focus, as it looks back at some classics for the title at Wrestlemania. Some of the other ladder matches get a focus as well.

We look back at AJ and Paige brawling on Monday after the Bellas got under their skin.

We get a cool video of Rusev talking about how he's broken Cena and how it means he's broken America. By contrast, Cena promises to fight back for America and we see him getting a lot more intense to get the rematch at Wrestlemania, only to get laid out again on Raw.

Video on Rollins vs. Orton which focuses on Orton being the future ten years ago and Rollins being today's future. Unfortunately it also talks about Orton infiltrating the Authority and beating Rollins down. It didn't make sense then, it didn't make sense when he explained it, and it doesn't make sense now.

Here's AJ for the big showdown with Paige. She says we've seen her as

everything from the GM to everyone's girlfriend to the longest reigning Divas Champion of all time. Paige and AJ both love being Divas Champion but at Wrestlemania, AJ is going to stand up to the Bellas and give them what they deserve. The question is whether AJ will be doing it alone.

Cue Paige who says AJ can't just skip past what happened on Raw. It's been almost a year since Paige debuted and took the Divas Title from AJ, which is why AJ doesn't want her to have it back. AJ says she gets what she wants and she knows Paige is out of her mind too. At Wrestlemania, they can't let the Kardashians win. They shake hands but here are the Bellas with a rebuttal.

Nikki calls them the compulsive liar and the backstabber but AJ's ability to make everyone believe her doesn't work on the Bellas. AJ doesn't seem to care but Nikki says Brock Lesnar has worked more days in the last year than AJ has. Nikki has been running the division for a year and the two girls in the ring are just like every other girl in the back. "Who doesn't want to be a Bella?" Paige: "Who wants to be a D-list celebrity and a failed actress?" Paige says they like being the freaks and geeks and the girls that beat the Bellas at Wrestlemania. The Bellas are ready for Sunday. Good promo, but why isn't the title on the line?

Video on HHH's rise to the top of WWE and how he's come to dominate the company. Sting on the other hand is the face of WCW and the one guy that has never been in WWE, making it a huge dream match. I really wish they had decided on the story. It seemed like a rehash of WCW vs. WWE but the interesting story is that HHH and the Authority can't use their bullying tactics on Sting because he's the one guy pure enough and a big enough legend for it to have no effect. Sting tried to get away from the WCW thing and even called it ridiculous, but Stephanie decided that's what it should be about and she runs this place right?

The next recap is on Undertaker vs. Bray Wyatt, with Undertaker finally coming off a loss at Wrestlemania and Bray wanting to replace him as the new face of fear. This is a really easy story but Bryan can only say the same thing so many times without Undertaker showing up. That same problem has plagued this show in multiple matches.

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns/Mark Henry vs. Seth Rollins/Bray Wyatt/Big Show/Kane

Time for the token main event to make it clear that we're watching a wrestling show. Isn't Wyatt as part of the Authority kind of against what his character stands for? Reigns shoves Rollins around to start and explodes out of the corner with a clothesline. He adds eight more clotheslines in the corner and a nice tilt-a-whirl slam for no cover as Rollins is in early trouble.

Wyatt comes in but eats a right hand as well and gets Stunned over the top rope. Reigns brings back the Apron Kick and it's all good guys so far. Off to Kane, who I guess is supposed to be more intimidating. He charges into Reigns' boot in the corner and a middle rope clothesline gets two so it's off to Big Show.

Henry wants in and gets the tag, giving us the battle of the giants. As expected, this goes badly for Henry and the heels stomp away on the fallen strongman. He looks like a fat turtle on the mat. Back to Kane for more stomping and the tall men take turns chopping Henry down. A superkick stops Mark's comeback and we take a break.

Back with Cena coming in to clean house but Bray does his flying body block to put him down. The giants take turns on Cena this time as the dueling chants start up. Wyatt gets in a cheap shot as Rollins comes in to keep the bad guys in control. John wins a slugout with Rollins but Seth flips out of the AA and kicks Cena down again. The backsplash hits but a second attempt misses for Bray.

Rollins breaks up another tag attempt with a sleeper and jumps on Cena's back for good measure. That's fine with Cena as he drives Rollins into the corner, only to get caught with a Blockbuster for two. Big Show comes in (Big Show vs. Cena!) but misses the Vader Bomb, meaning it's already back to Rollins. He doesn't have the same luck this time as Cena backdrops him to the floor and it's hot tag to Bryan.

Things speed way up and Bryan hits the top rope hurricanrana, followed by the YES Kick. He has to go after the Stooges though and Rollins gets in a kick of his own. Time for more Big Show but Reigns comes in with the

Superman Punch. Sister Abigail is countered with a spear and Kane gets one as well. Henry and Reigns splash Show in the corner and the AA sets up the running knee to pin Big Show at 19:31.

Rating: D+. This was long, dull and completely unimportant as the only people in the same Wrestlemania match were Kane, Big Show and Henry who aren't even on the main show anymore. Like I said, this was total filler and I'm really not a fan of having a match just to waste time. They did a decent job of making Reigns look good, but does beating up Kane and Big Show really mean much at this point?

Overall Rating: C. Yeah whatever. This is one of the shows I dread every year because it's just a big commercial for Sunday and much more for people who aren't watching the last few weeks. The wrestling here was just to remind us that it was a wrestling show and somehow I wound up liking the Divas stuff more than anything else, despite the match at Sunday not even being for the title. Dull show but that's a tradition for this episode.

Results

Jimmy Uso b. Cesaro, Big E. and Fernando – Superfly Splash to Cesaro

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/Mark Henry/Roman Reigns b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins/Bray Wyatt – Running knee to Big Show

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXV: They Really Did This

Wrestlemania XXV

Date: April 5, 2009

Location: Reliant Stadium, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 72,744

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

After last year's great show, we get...this. Wrestlemania 25 is often listed alongside the worst Wrestlemanias of all time. I watched it live and thought it sucked other than the candidate for best match ever in the middle of it. This is one of the ones that I wasn't looking forward to but I have to be tortured for this job. Let's get to it.

We open with a video of people being asked what the biggest moment in Wrestlemania history is over the first 25 years (let me get this out of the way: IT WAS TWENTY FOUR AT THAT TIME. This drove me CRAZY at the time because the show was built up as the 25th anniversary of the show, but that isn't how things work. Think about it: when you get married, the day a year later is your first anniversary, meaning that Wrestlemania 2 would be the first anniversary, Wrestlemania 3 is your second anniversary and so on to Wrestlemania 25 being the TWENTY FOURTH ANNIVERSARY, NOT THE TWENTY FIFTH!).

Anyway the answers are exactly what you would expect: ladder match, Hogan slamming Andre, Hogan vs. Warrior etc. This leads to a video of people saying they're making the top moment tonight.

Nicole Scherzinger of the Pussycat Dolls sings America the Beautiful.

MVP vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Christian vs. Kofi Kingston vs. CM Punk vs. Finlay vs. Mark Henry vs. Kane

MITB here. Henry has Tony Atlas with him, MVP is the face US Champion and

Kofi is still Jamaican. BIG pop for Christian here. It's a big brawl to start as the fans are solidly behind Christian here. Christian and Shelton run over Henry with the big ladder but Kofi jumps over it and takes both guys down. There's a Boom Drop onto the ladder onto both guys. The ladder is set up in the ring but here's Kane to beat everyone up.

Henry and Kane go up the ladder but everyone bands together to pull them down. The monsters are both sent to the floor and a second regular sized ladder is set up. A bunch of people go up but Kane and Henry shove everyone down. Kane kicks Henry down and loads up the big ladder again. Henry breaks up that attempt but opts to throw the ladder at Finlay instead of climbing.

Finlay dives through the ropes at Kane and Shelton so Christian can dive onto Finlay and Kane to take them out. MVP dives on all three of them and Kofi and Punk hit stereo suicide dives to take out all four guys. Shelton climbs onto the huge ladder and DIVES onto all five guys, looking like he landed on his head at first look. Now HENRY goes up top but Finlay breaks it up to prevent an earthquake.

Horny slides in his own ladder to climb onto Henry's back and dive onto all six guys on the floor. Finlay is the only guy standing and throws in a big ladder, but he had to fight Kofi. Kofi dives THROUGH the ladder and drops it onto Finlay for good measure. Finlay drops him with the Horny ladder and does the same to Christian and Kane. The Irishman tries to go up but Kofi kicks him down.

Kingston tries for a climb but Henry is back again and shoves down the ladder. In an AWESOME spot, Henry holds the ladder to set it in place and Kofi runs up, only to be dropped down and hit with a World's Strongest Slam onto the ladder. MVP slides a ladder into the standing one to make a kind of platform. Shelton slides under the ladder and kicks MVP in the ribs. MVP comes back with a kind of powerbomb on Benjamin but Punk stops the climb.

Now it's Christian and Punk with Punk on the ladder and Christian on the platform. Now they're both on the same side of the ladder and Christian hits the Killswitch off the ladder. By hits I mean Christian drops him in

midair and Punk's head never came within three feet of the mat but you do what you can I guess. MVP climbs up but Shelton climbs a ladder on the floor to get to the platform to get to the ladder for a sunset bomb to MVP. By sunset bomb, I mean he doesn't get MVP over and basically pulls MVP's face down the ladder. That's two big blown spots in a row.

MVP is up first and pounds on Shelton before being powerbombed over the top rope and down onto a few guys. His head looked to smack against the barricade in a scary spot. Shelton and Finlay are on the ladder now and Finlay is knocked onto the ladder platform. Christian takes Shelton down and pounds away until Shelton takes the platform apart.

Shelton and Christian are both standing on two ladders but Christian shoves Shelton to the floor. Punk however springboards onto the ladders but gets caught upside down in a ladder, which is what Punk did to Christian to win last year. Kane stops Christian and chokeshoves him down to the mat. Punk pops up and kicks Kane down to win his second straight MITB.

Rating: B-. The blown spots REALLY bring this down because they were some terribly blown spots. Punk winning is fine as it was eventually the catalyst for his heel turn but that wouldn't be for about six months. The match was good and having some fresh blood with Kofi out there helped, but the match overall was a letdown compared to other years, as the problem becomes "how do you top the other stuff?". Still good though.

Video on WWE taking over Houston for the week.

Now we get to the part of this show which makes fans' heads hurt: a TWELVE MINUTE Kid Rock song medley. Keep in mind that a unification match for the two sets of tag titles was on the preshow and ran about 9 minutes. THAT can't make Wrestlemania but this nonsense can. This is to set up the Miss Wrestlemania battle royal.

Miss Wrestlemania: Divas Battle Royal

Melina, Beth Phoenix, Santina Marella, Victoria, Brie Bella, Eve Torres, Gail Kim, Jackie Gayda, Tiffany, Sunny, Rosa Mendes, Nikki Bella, Jillian Hall, Joy Giovanni, Katie Lea Burchill, Kelly Kelly, Layla, Maria,

Maryse, Michelle McCool, Mickie James, Molly Holly, Natalya, Alicia Fox, Rosa Mendes, Torrie Wilson

The medley contains the entrances for all 25 girls, none of whom get entrances or even introductions, so the fans have no idea who all is in this thing for the most part. Justin Roberts is reading the rules and people are already being eliminated. Not that we're told WHO THEY ARE or anything but whatever. Oh and you can go through the ropes too. Cole: "You can get a look at all the entrants in this on WWE.com!" Yeah, that's the only way to see them because KID ROCK had to eat up all their time.

Sunny, Torrie, Layla and Rosa are out for sure but the rest of them aren't even mentioned. Gail and Jillian eliminate each other as Beth eliminates Tiffany and some other chick not mentioned. Molly and Kelly are put out as is Maryse. Beth dumps both Bellas and the only Divas left are Michelle, Mickie, Melina and Beth. Mickie and Michelle eliminate each other but Santina eliminates the other two. It's Santino in drag if that wasn't clear. Yeah, THIS is your payoff for bringing back all those famous chicks. This led to months of STUPID jokes and skits about them being brother and sister or something. No rating but this was awful.

Beth is ticked off, which led to months of stupid fights between the two of them. Santina dances post match.

We recap Jericho vs. Piper/Snuka/Steamboat which is built around the Mickey Rourke movie The Wrestler. The idea is that Jericho insulted Rourke and the movie because it's not the same as getting in the ring. Rourke said he'd fight at Mania then backpedaled. We then had Jericho insult Snuka, Piper and Steamboat for sticking around too long. Flair was insulted as well but since Flair can't wrestle anymore, Jericho beat up and challenged the other legends to a match here tonight.

Rourke is at ringside.

Chris Jericho vs. Roddy Piper/Jimmy Snuka/Ricky Steamboat

Flair is here to support his fellow old people. If I had to guess, I'd say he's somewhere between smashed and alcohol poisoning. Jericho has to beat all three legends to win so he starts with Piper. Roddy looks bad

but considering less than two years earlier he was diagnosed with lymphoma, this is pretty impressive.

Piper fires away to start and takes it to the mat before hooking a quick sunset flip for two. A kind of dropkick puts Chris down and Roddy pounds away in the corner. Jimmy comes in and the match turns into slow motion. To be fair he's about 65 here. Ricky comes in and starts cranking on the arm as you would expect him to. Back to Jimmy for a double chop although only Ricky's actually hits. Out of nowhere Jericho puts on the Walls for the elimination.

Piper comes back in and works over the ribs before throwing on the sleeper. It only lasts for a few seconds though before Jericho rams him into the top rope and gets the elimination via a running enziguri. This leaves Steamboat vs. Jericho with the Dragon coming in with the top rope cross body for a VERY close near fall. A snapmare puts Ricky down and Jericho kicks him in the back before putting on a chinlock. In the STUPID part of the show, Jericho throws Steamboat over the ropes for him to skin the cat, but LET'S LOOK AT FLAIR INSTEAD!

Jericho gets backdropped over the top to the floor and IT'S A FLYING OLD MAN to take Jericho down again. Back in and a top rope chop has Jericho reeling. Steamboat jumps over Chris out of the corner and gets a rollup for two. Jericho finally hits the bulldog but the Lionsault misses. Ricky grabs a powerslam out of nowhere for two but gets caught in the Walls. Steamboat reverses THAT into a small package for the hottest two count you'll see in years. If that's not enough, Steamboat backflips out of a belly to back suplex, only to walk into the Codebreaker to let Jericho survive.

Rating: B-. WOW Steamboat had me going here and I knew what the ending was. Steamboat was 56 years old here and hadn't wrestled regularly in FIFTEEN YEARS and just had the crowd actually believing he could beat Jericho five months after he lost the world title. That's ASTONISHING and would lead to a one on one match between these two at Backlash. Snuka and Piper were there for one last hurrah but Steamboat was trying to steal the show and came pretty freaking close. This is a great example of a match with NO reason to be good which wound up being pretty sweet.

Post match Flair comes in but gets beaten down too. Jericho taunts Rourke (a real life former pro boxer) and gets punched out. This somehow took five minutes.

We recap Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy. The idea is that stuff had started happening to Jeff such as pyro nearly blinding him, someone trying to run him off the road, and BURNING HIS HOUSE DOWN. At Royal Rumble, Matt revealed that it was him behind it because he was jealous of Jeff's success. Naturally, no charges were ever filed or anything like that, because why do that when you can have an extreme rules match here instead?

Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy

Matt now has regular tights instead of the cargo jeans. Jeff takes him down and pounds away to start before heading to the floor. A hard poster to the head doesn't do much to Matt, presumably BECAUSE IT WAS A POSTER. The steps work a bit better and there's Poetry in Motion against the barricade to crush Matt. Back in and Poetry in Motion hits the corner instead of Matt and the Whisper in the Wind only hits chair.

Matt chokes away on the ropes and punches away at Jeff's head. The Side Effect onto a chair gets two so Matt bends Jeff's back around the post. It's table time but Jeff fights off a suplex through said table and hits a running clothesline off the apron. Jeff busts out a kendo stick and a crutch to beat on Matt's back before putting a trashcan over Matt's head for the slingshot dropkick for two.

There goes Jeff's shirt but the Swanton completely misses. The Twist of Fate gets two for Matt and he's getting frustrated. Matt calls for a Swanton but gets caught in a superplex instead for no cover. There's a BIG chair shot to Matt's head which sends him to the floor. Jeff lays Matt on the table before putting another table on top of that table. There's a HUGE splash through both tables along with Matt to leave everyone laying.

Back in and that only gets two, and now it's time for the ladders required by a Hardys match. A legdrop keeps Matt down and the ladder is set up. Make that two ladders with one being bigger than the other. Jeff

climbs the small ladder and jumps over the tall ladder, only to miss his big legdrop. Matt puts Jeff's neck in the chair for a Twist of Fate to finally end this.

Rating: B. This was a solid brawl but it would all go downhill from here. Their feud didn't ever quite work for the most part because the audience wasn't all that interested and Matt didn't work as a top heel. As for this match though, they beat the tar out of each other and Matt looked violent and evil. Unfortunately he couldn't back that up for the most part.

Orton is ready for the main event.

Intercontinental Title: Rey Mysterio vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Rey is challenging. JBL goes on a rant about how much Texas sucks and how they've lost their backbone. After this match is over, JBL is bailing on Texas and heading back to New York where he loves to be. Rey is the Joker from Dark Knight this year. They actually do big match intros here which isn't something you see for a midcard title match. The referee reads them the rules and JBL kicks Rey in the head. Now the bell rings and Rey hits an enziguri, the 619 and a top rope splash for the pin and the title in about 20 seconds.

Post match JBL says he quits, which is his actual retirement as he's never wrestled since.

We recap Shawn vs. Undertaker. Shawn freed himself from JBL at No Way Out and realized he needed a new challenge. What better for Mr. Wrestlemania to do than challenge the Streak? Shawn read passages from the Bible about separating light from darkness to show the differences between the two of them. Do you need more of a buildup than that?

Undertaker vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn comes down from the top of the set all in white, Undertaker comes through the stage in black. Now THAT is an entrance. Feeling out process to start with Shawn circling around Taker and sticking with a few jabs here and there. Michaels pounds away in the corner and hits a hard chop

but Taker catches an incoming right hand. Taker LAUNCHES him into the corner and nearly out to the floor, only for Shawn to jump off the top and over Undertaker to get away.

Shawn might have hurt his knee but he's channeling his inner Bret by goldbricking. Taker will have none of that and throws Shawn into the corner for more punishment. Michaels comes back with chops in the corner but gets backdropped down to stop the momentum. Taker drives some shoulder into Shawn but Shawn takes him down with a clothesline. The reverse Figure Four (called a regular one by that idiot Michael Cole) has Taker in trouble but he finally slugs his way out of it.

Taker pounds away in the corner but has to stop to shake life back into his leg. Snake eyes and the big boot put Shawn down and a legdrop gets two (brother). A chokeslam is countered into the Crossface by Shawn but Taker rolls over onto his side to block a lot of the pressure. After an attempted rollup by Undertaker, Shawn cranks on the hold a bit more, only to have Taker fight up and hit a big side slam for two. Back up and they slug it out with Shawn taking over via a flying forearm.

There's the nipup but Shawn doesn't tune up the band. Instead it's a pair of atomic drops and a clothesline but as Shawn goes up, he jumps into the chokeslam. He escapes THAT and tries the superkick but is too far away, meaning the kick only hits Taker's chest. It puts Taker down so Shawn tries the Figure Four but Taker counters into Hell's Gate. Shawn flails around and gets a foot on the rope for a fast break but he's clearly staggered.

We head to the floor for a bit but Taker misses the apron legdrop. A baseball slide keeps Taker on the floor but as Shawn tries the moonsault to the floor, Taker moves and Shawn CRASHES onto the concrete. Back inside and Taker sits up and busts out the Taker Dive, only to overrotate and CRASH in a terrifying landing. Shawn thankfully pulled a cameraman in the way to block some of the impact but this scared me to death live.

Shawn tells the referee to count in a kind of mid-match heel turn but Taker makes it back in at nine. Another superkick attempt is ducked and a HUGE chokeslam gets an insanely close two. The fans are getting way into

these near falls now. The Tombstone is countered, the superkick is blocked, the chokeslam is escaped and NOW the superkick hits for a very delayed two count. Shawn is up now and looks all ticked off.

Taker grabs him by the throat but the Last Ride is countered into a sunset flip bid, but THAT is countered into the biggest Last Ride ever for two. Watching this match for probably the fourth time I actually thought that was the finish. Think about that for a minute. Taker goes up top and misses a top rope elbow but as Shawn tries to skin the cat, Undertaker catches him in the Tombstone. He sticks the tongue out but THAT gets two, I believe making Shawn either the first or second guy ever to kick out of all three of Taker's finishers.

Taker nearly collapses from the shock and has a look on his face saying he has no idea where to go now. Shawn spins out of a Tombstone bid into a DDT and both guys are down. Michaels slowly crawls to the top and drops the elbow for no cover. Instead he tunes up the band again and the fans are all over him as a result. The kick hits clean and Shawn covers almost immediately but it only gets two. These kickouts are getting better and better each time.

They fight up from their knees and use each other to pull themselves up before slugging it out with everything they've got. A big boot puts Shawn down but Taker charges into a boot in the corner to put him down. Shawn climbs up top and tries a moonsault press, but Taker somehow catches him in mid air for another Tombstone to make him 16-0, and that's your match of the year.

Rating: A+. Masterpiece, excellent, classic, best match they've ever had, best match of all time candidate etc. Pick one, as they're all appropriate. This is one of the only matches ever where I've been on the edge of my seat the entire time and lost my mind on the kickouts. Absolutely outstanding here and one of the best matches I've ever seen, and that covers quite a bit of ground.

Now what gets to follow that?

We recap Edge vs. Big Show vs. Cena for the Raw Title. Edge switched brands at No Way Out after losing the WWE Title and won the World Title

in the other Chamber match, because the titles are interchangeable props which you can pass around like this for no apparent reason. Edge's wife Vickie was blackmailed into putting Cena into a triple threat match because Cena had video of Show and Vickie having an affair. This is basically a glorified handicap match.

Raw World Title: Edge vs. Big Show vs. John Cena

Edge is defending and Vickie is STILL in the wheelchair. Cena's big entrance this year: an army of probably 60 guys dressed in Cena gear make a tunnel for the real Cena to run through, complete with the old Word Life theme song. Cena fights off both guys but the numbers catch up with him, allowing the heels to take him down. Edge is knocked to the floor and it's back to Cena who gets beaten down by the monster.

Show goes outside to get Edge but the champion dropkicks the steps into Show's knees, allowing Cena to hit the top rope Fameasser to drive Show's face into the floor. Back in and Cena tries a quick AA, only to be countered into the Edgecution for two. Show comes back in with a side slam for two on John but Cena comes back with right hands. When those don't do much he tries to hit the ropes but Vickie's nephew Chavo pulls him to the floor. That earns him an AA and we head back inside where John knocks Show into the ropes to tie him up. Show: "GET ME OUT OF HERE!"

Cena beats down Edge and now has a free shot at Big Show. Instead he hits the Shuffle on Edge which is actually pretty smart when you think about it. Here comes the AA but Vickie gets on the apron. Cena drops Edge but avoids a spear, sending Edge into Vickie. The distraction lets Cena roll Edge up for two but a collision puts both guys down. Show gets loose and beats up both other guys including hitting a splash to both guys in the same corner.

Cena escapes a double chokeslam but can't get the AA. Instead Show hits him with the WMD but instead of, I don't know, COVERING, he goes to the floor after Edge. Edge counters a chokeslam into a DDT on the floor and all three guys are down. The champion crawls over to the steps and sets them right next to Show. With a running start, Edge uses the steps as a springboard and dives at Show, sending both of them through the barricade

and into the crowd.

Back in and Edge gets two on Cena but the spear is countered into the STF. John pulls it back to the center of the ring but Big Show breaks it up by grabbing Cena's throat. A Vader Bomb elbow misses Edge and everyone is down again. In a rare sight, Edge and Cena team up to suplex Show down and then clothesline him to the floor.

The Throwback puts Edge down but as Cena goes up, Show shoves him off and into a spear from Edge for two. Everyone is inside again and Show charges into a boot from Edge. The champion tries a sleeper on Show, so in the HOW DID HE DO THAT spot of the year, Cena AA's BOTH OF THEM AT THE SAME TIME. Edge slides off and Show takes the full brunt. Cena hits an AA on Edge onto Big Show and pins the giant for the title.

Rating: B-. Fine but it's another meaningless title change in a year which would be full of such things. Edge would get the title back at Backlash to make sure that these title reigns are as forgettable as possible and give us Cena vs. Big Show for about the ninth time. The match was just ok for the most part until the eye popping finish.

Wrestlemania 26 is in Phoenix.

Now we get the Hall of Fame class: Terry and Dory Funk, Howard Finkel, Koko B. Ware, the Von Erichs and Ricky Steamboat. Oh and Steve Austin. Yeah him too. He takes off his suit and rides his ATV around ringside for one last moment.

This brings us to the main event of HHH vs. Orton. This was basically a continuation of Orton vs. the McMahons with HHH being the big soldier to fight in the war. Vince and Shane had already been taken out and Orton won the Rumble to get us here. With HHH firmly in his sights (again), Orton went on the attack.

One night on Raw, HHH was knocked into the ropes and tied up as Stephanie came down. Orton gave Stephanie the Elevated DDT before kissing her on the lips, further enraging HHH. At one point in the rivalry, HHH broke into Orton's house and threw him through a window. Orton decided to fight HHH at Wrestlemania instead of pressing charges. The stage was perfectly

set for the great beat down by HHH, allowing him to let out all of his aggression and rage on Orton.

While not the greatest story in the world, at least there was a solid idea and we should get a solid brawl out of things. There's nothing wrong with a good old fashioned beating of a hated rival is there? Well apparently WWE saw something wrong with it, because there was a stipulation added: if HHH gets countered out or more importantly disqualified, he loses the WWE Title. Upon hearing this, everyone collectively said HUH?

This stipulation made no sense. The whole point of the match was to see HHH beat the stuffing out of Orton once and for all. What possible good could there be to make it a match where HHH had to keep calm and play by the rules? For some reason, this is what we got at Wrestlemania XXV.

HHH vs. Randy Orton

HHH has a cool entrance here as he swings his hammer at the camera, only to reveal that it's a big mirror that he shatters. They stare at each other for a bit before HHH takes Orton down and pounds away. The champion stomps on Orton in the corner and is threatened with a DQ, showing us how stupid this gimmick is. With HHH yelling at the referee, Orton grabs an RKO out of nowhere a minute and five seconds in. The Punt misses and there's the Pedigree but HHH can't follow up.

Orton is sent to the floor and rammed into the announce table before heading back in for more right hands. HHH catapults Orton throat first into the bottom rope before dropping some knees on the head. Randy heads back to the floor and counters a whip to send HHH into the steps. HHH gets whipped into the timekeeper's table which apparently hurt his shoulder. Orton tries to get the countout to get the title but the Game is back in at nine.

Randy drops some knees and kicks to the ribs and it's off to the chinlock. Back up after a few moments in the hold and HHH punches his way out of the corner. The jumping knee to Orton's face puts him down and there's the facebuster for good measure. The Pedigree is countered into a catapult though, sending HHH face first into the buckle. Not that it

really matters though as a clothesline puts Orton down for two as the slow pace finally picks up a bit.

HHH gets shoved off the top but Orton dives off the top into a boot. A rollup gets two for the champion and they slug it out some more. The spinebuster puts Randy down but the Pedigree is countered into Orton's backbreaker for two. HHH gets in another clothesline and goes up for some reason, only to jump into a dropkick. A kick to HHH's ribs is caught and Orton is flipped over the top and out to the floor. They head over to the announce table and HHH picks up a monitor but drops it for fear of losing the title.

The champion tries a Pedigree on the announce table, only to be backdropped down onto the table which doesn't break. With HHH still on the table, Orton hits the Elevated DDT to drive HHH head first into the floor. HHH still manages to get back in at 9 so Orton stomps away even more. Randy stomps away in the corner and chokes away as this is dragging again. HHH comes back but Orton throws HHH into the referee. There's the RKO but the referee is down.

With no referee, Orton goes to the floor and gets a sledgehammer, but as he gets back inside HHH punts him in the head. A shot to the head with the sledgehammer puts Orton down and HHH pounds away. Orton is out cold so HHH hits another Pedigree for good measure and retains the title.

Rating: D. Erg that was awful. This was the same problem they had with the Cena vs. HHH match from a few years ago, where it felt like they were trying for something epic that told a story but it didn't work at all. Instead it was these two punching and kicking a lot while having to stop because they might get disqualified. This didn't work at all because the match didn't fit the buildup, which was only decent in the first place.

HHH stands over Orton's body like a viking standing over a big kill to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. There's a lot to say here. First and foremost, this show is WAY better than I remember it with only two bad matches the whole way through. Unfortunately, the first of those two matches is after a nearly fifteen minute concert which no one wanted to see. The other match

though is the main event which counting recap, entrances and post match stuff is nearly 40 minutes. That match is like a sledgehammer to the knees of this show and is easily one of the worst main events in Mania history.

On the other hand, the rest of the show is shockingly good, but it falls short of what it could have been in places. MITB is probably the worst yet but still solid, the Legends match was good but had absolutely no right to be, the Hardy match was good but nothing more, and the triple threat was about the same. The problem here is that one match is all anyone really remembers from this show other than a few individual moments. The memory of the main event hurts this thing a lot as it's the only thing people remember other than the Streak match. Much better show than I remember, but it's no classic.

Ratings Comparison

Finlay vs. Christian vs. CM Punk vs. Mark Henry vs. Kofi Kingston vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. MVP vs. Kane

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Divas Battle Royal

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Roddy Piper/Jimmy Snuka/Ricky Steamboat vs. Chris Jericho

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy

Original: C

Redo: B

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Shawn Michaels vs. Undertaker

Original: A+

Redo: A+

John Cena vs. Edge vs. Big Show

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Randy Orton vs. HHH

Original: F+

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: D

Redo: B-

Did I mention this was the first live review I ever did?

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/04/01/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-25-oh-dear-oh-dear-indeed/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXIV: Leave The Memories Alone

Wrestlemania XXIV

Date: March 30, 2008

Location: Citrus Bowl, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 74,365

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman, Joey Styles, Tazz

We're going outside for the first time in a long time for this one. It's also the first time the show has been in Florida which is odd for some reason. Anyway the main events here are Undertaker challenging Edge for the title and Orton defending against HHH and Cena. As for HHH's life mate Shawn, he's facing Flair in what was pretty clearly going to be Flair's last match. Let's get to it.

John Legend sings America the Beautiful.

The set is awesome with palm trees everywhere and a big canopy.

As usual, the big names on tonight's show talk about how important this night is to them. It's a used formula, but it always works.

This transitions into a video about how so many things can change in a year. People can return, champions can fall and surprises can occur, but it all culminates here.

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Finlay

This is a Belfast Brawl which means street fight. Finlay was revealed to be Hornswoggle's dad and JBL beat up the tiny man as a favor to Vince. Tonight it's about revenge. Horny comes out with Finlay to appeal to the kids. Finlay charges at the ring and gets drilled by a knee to the head. JBL pounds away on the floor but gets sent shoulder first into the steps. We head inside for the opening bell and Finlay slides right back out to find some trashcans.

As he gets back in though JBL CRACKS him with a can and picks up some cookie sheets. Now the steps are brought in but JBL can't powerbomb Finlay onto them. Some cookie sheet shots to the head put JBL down for two but a big boot does the same to Finlay. JBL stops to yell at Horny, allowing for the shot with that Irish club that I can't spell. Since this is a WWE hardcore style match, it's table time.

The table is set up in the corner but Finlay picks up the steps instead. JBL bails to the floor and beats on Horny, only to be rammed into the announce table by Papa Horny for his efforts. A trashcan lid to the head stops Finlay and gets two back inside, allowing JBL to pick up a trashcan and LAUNCH IT at Horny. That looked great.

Speaking of trashcans, a shot to JBL breaks up the Clothesline and Finlay blasts him with a lid for good measure. JBL is sent through the table for two and the fans are pleased. Finlay picks up the steps but gets blasted in the knee by a kendo stick, allowing JBL to knock him out with the Clothesline for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was fine. The whole point of this was to have a power brawl with some basic weapons which is what we got. I'm really not sure on JBL winning as the fans were solidly behind Horny and Finlay, but at least the match was entertaining and there were some hard shots in there. Good stuff here.

Kim Kardashian is guest hostess. She wasn't famous for the most part yet here. Kennedy pops in and says he'll win MITB and Kardashian is a little disturbed. Well to be fair she disturbs a lot of people so everything is even.

CM Punk vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. John Morrison vs. Chris Jericho vs. MVP vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Carlito

Morrison is a tag champion and MVP is US Champion, having held it for nearly a year. Jericho is also Intercontinental Champion because what else is he supposed to do? Everyone goes after a ladder to start other than MVP who stays in the ring. Someone slides one in and MVP uses it to knock everyone down. Jericho brings in a big ladder and it's time for a duel. MVP goes down and here's Morrison to use his own ladder to send Jericho down.

In an awesome move, Morrison goes up top with the ladder and moonsaults down onto a bunch of guys at once. Kennedy uses the distraction to go up but Jericho makes the save. He tries a catapult on Kennedy but sends him onto the ladder by mistake. Morrison dives onto the ladder to stop Kennedy but Shelton climbs his own ladder to make it a three way race. Kennedy loads up a superplex on Morrison but Shelton jumps over both of them with a sunset flip to make it a Tower of Doom. Cool spot.

Carlito tries to shove Shelton off the ladder but he lands on the top rope on his feet. Shelton shoves the ladder at Carlito and tries to dive onto said ladder but it gives way. Punk stops Shelton from going up and hits the GTS but Kennedy stops him with the rolling fireman's carry onto a ladder. MVP is back in now to kick Kennedy in the head but gets sent into a ladder by Carlito.

Shelton's dragon whip CRACKS Carlito in the head but as he goes up, Kennedy and Carlito shove the ladder forward, sending Shelton over the top and through a ladder which was bridged between the ring and the barricade. Carlito and Kennedy go up but MVP breaks that up, only to be broken up by Morrison. Jericho breaks up Morrison's attempt by putting him in the Walls on top of the ladder. Again, awesome. Kennedy tries to use the opening but Jericho throws John down and starts brawling.

Punk and Carlito dive at the ladders to make it a fourway with only Jericho lasting on top. Carlito comes back with the Backstabber off the ladder and everyone is down again. MVP goes up the ladder but here's the returning Matt Hardy to stop him with a Twist of Fate off the ladder.

Everyone is back in again and Jericho beats on all of them with the ladder. In a cool visual one ladder is jammed into the bottom of another, so as Morrison climbs the vertical (and unfolded) one, Jericho shoves it back into the corner and onto Punk.

Carlito and Jericho go up but Carlito spits apple in the face to break it up. Kennedy shoves Carlito off but gets hit in the ribs with a ladder by Punk. Jericho hits a Codebreaker with a ladder onto Punk to put everyone not named Jericho down. Punk goes up to stop Jericho but gets hit in the face by the briefcase. Punk climbs up again and knocks Jericho into the Tree of Woe with a shot to the head, allowing Punk to climb up and win the briefcase.

Rating: B. Good MITB here but as usual the high amount of people hurt it. Nothing here really stood out other than the Walls and Matt's return, as you can only get so much out of the same spots we've seen before. It's certainly good but it's a step below some of the other stuff, and this would only get worse until we got some fresh blood in there. A power guy wouldn't hurt either.

Orton, HHH and Cena are ready.

We look at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony from last night. The big deal of this was having Rock back to induct Rocky Johnson and Peter Maivia, his father and grandfather. The headliner though was Ric Flair who of course had everyone in tears.

Fink comes out to do the live introductions of this year's class. They include the Brisco Brothers, Gordon Solie (represented by his kids), Johnson and Maivia, Eddie Graham, Mae Young (who tries to strip) and Flair (represented by his children, including Reid who died about three days before this was written).

Snoop Dog is here to emcee the Playboy match later and apparently has a friend in Festus. Heel Santino Marella comes up to say that he's going to be at the match later but Snoop rings the bell to send Festus into a rage. Mick Foley pops up for a cameo, complete with Snoop Sock.

Batista vs. Umaga

This is a Battle for Brand Supremacy with Batista on the blue team and Umaga on the red team. Seriously that's the whole story here. Regal and Teddy are here as GM's/motivators. Slugout to start followed by Umaga missing a charge into the corner. Batista sends him to the floor but once back inside Umaga takes Big Dave down with a spinwheel kick (decent one too). A big unbooted foot sends Batista to the floor and Umaga is in full control.

Umaga gets nowhere off a quick nerve hold and gets even worse off a missed swan dive. Batista can't slam him down though and Umaga falls on top for two. A HARD kick to Batista's back sets up another nerve hold to keep things slow. Back up and Batista walks into a Samoan Drop for another near fall. They fight up again and Batista gets up a boot in the corner to slow Umaga down. After blocking the Samoan Spike, Batista hits a spinebuster and the "Batista Bomb" (read as Batista picks him up and falls backwards to send Umaga to the mat) for the pin.

Rating: D-. This was AWFUL with Batista doing nothing and being booed for most of his comeback. I can't say I blame the fans either as the match was just dull all around. How this makes Smackdown bigger than Raw is beyond me but that's what WWE says so who am I to argue? Match sucked.

We look at the tale of the tape for Big Show vs. Floyd Mayweather, the latter being about as tall as my grandmother.

We look at the battle royal from the preshow with Kane winning a shot at the ECW Title.

ECW Title: Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

In less time than it takes to type "in less time than it takes to type", Kane chokeslams Chavo and pins him for the title. Match ran about 6 seconds.

Actress Raven Symone is here for some charity thing and SHOUTS ABOUT IT A LOT.

We recap Shawn vs. Flair. This was an odd build up as Vince said that the next match Flair lost would mean his retirement. This basically started

Flair's retirement tour as he held onto the title in upset after upset until he was all of a sudden on a roll. This led to Flair challenging Mr. Wrestlemania Shawn Michaels to a showdown at Wrestlemania, because if Flair can't beat him he doesn't want to keep going.

Flair was inducted into the Hall of Fame and it was made as clear as possible that Flair was going down to Shawn in Orlando. This led to a tear jerking video set to Leave the Memories Alone with a highlight reel of Flair's career. The idea is that Shawn doesn't want to do this but Flair wants Shawn to bring it.

Ric Flair vs. Shawn Michaels

Feeling out process to start with neither guy being able to get the advantage. A hip toss puts Shawn down and Ric shouts about being Old Yeller, which Shawn referenced to set this up. Shawn chops him hard and Flair's lip is bleeding. They slug it out in the corner with Shawn taking over and going up top, only to be slammed down. Now Flair goes up and hits a cross body for two. Jerry: "IT ACTUALLY WORKED!"

Ric goes after the knee but Shawn kicks him to the floor. Shawn loads up an Asai Moonsault and hits table, landing square on the edge ribs first. That looked HORRIBLE and Shawn is in big trouble. Back in and a belly to back suplex gets two for Flair. Naitch stays on the ribs and hits a good looking suplex for two. Shawn comes back with a backdrop to send Flair to the floor and follows up with a moonsault which mostly hits floor.

Both guys make it back inside at nine and they chop it out. The forearm and nipup connect and Shawn starts slugging away. A slam sets up Shawn's top rope elbow but it hurts his ribs in the process. Michaels tunes up the band but can't bring himself to do it, allowing Flair to grab the Figure Four which is quickly broken. They fight to the mat and try Flair's bridge up out of a pinfall into the backslide but Ric is just too old.

Instead it's a sunset flip for two for Shawn but Flair takes out the knee with a chop block. The Figure Four is countered into an inside cradle for two. NOW the Figure Four goes on in the middle of the ring but Shawn finally rolls it over into the ropes. Back up and Shawn hits the

superkick out of nowhere but the cover only gets two. Shawn tunes up the band again but gets kicked low for two.

Michaels comes back with a reverse Figure Four but Flair manages to crawl to the ropes. A quick rollup with a handful of trunks gets two for Flair and he fires off chop after chop. Out of nowhere Shawn superkicks Flair down but Michaels can't cover. Flair slowly gets up and says bring it. Shawn looks at him, says "I'm sorry. I love you." and superkicks Flair into retirement.

Rating: B. This is a hard one to grade. The match itself was entertaining, but it wasn't supposed to be a competitive spectacle. This was designed to give Flair a great match to go out on and they almost did that. They made no secret about who was winning and that's ok, but at the same time it was like delaying the inevitable. It was a good match to send him out on and the fans were happy to see the famous spots one more time.

Flair gets a well deserved standing ovation. This match should have closed the show and was going to, but Flair said no because the title match should close the show. Usually I would agree but in this case, Flair should have ended the show. Ric takes the long walk up the ramp to nonstop applause.

Edge talks about being a Hulkamaniac at Wrestlemania 6 and watching his hero losing. His innocence was lost that day but it's ok. His life has come full circle because people rely on Undertaker to win at Wrestlemania. Tonight he's taking everyone innocence by breaking the streak.

Maria/Ashley vs. Beth Phoenix/Melina

This is a Playboy lumberjill match with Snoop Dogg as master of ceremonies in a golf cart. Snoop of course comes out with all of the lumberjills because that's what Snoop would do. Ashley is her usual self and Maria looks great. Also, her theme song continues to be ridiculously catchy. Oh and Beth is Women's Champion and has Santino with her. Melina has uh...wings.

Ashley tries to fight Beth and is immediately thrown around. Maria tries a double hip toss with Ashley which goes as well as you would expect two talentless models to be able to do. Melina is thrown to the floor and beaten up by the good Divas and takes a bad Bronco Buster from Maria. Ashley gets a running start to climb to the middle ropes to punch Melina as this mess continues. Melina takes over and catapults Ashley into a bearhug by Beth.

Melina hits a moonsault off of Beth's shoulders for two before we get a stupid trip from Ashley. Off to Maria for some kicks as the lights go out. They finally get a spotlight on as this continues to fall apart. Maria tries to counter the Glam Slam into a bulldog but can't even do that right. Melina breaks up the pin and we get heel miscommunication. Maria hits a kind of top rope bulldog but Santino breaks up the pin. Lawler punches out Santino but Beth hits a fisherman's buster for the pin on Maria.

Rating: F+. That's ALL for Maria looking great. I forgot this match was a lumberjill match after about a minute and the rest of the girls couldn't even be seen after that long. Maria was TERRIBLE here and she was the better worker on her team. This didn't work at all and was the disaster to end all disasters for Divas matches.

Post match Snoop lays out Santino with a clothesline and makes out with Maria. I'll give him this: he seemed to be having a blast out there.

We recap Orton vs. HHH vs. Cena. Orton won the title by forfeit at No Mercy and Cena is back from injury to reclaim the title that he never lost. HHH won the Elimination Chamber to get a shot as well.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. HHH vs. John Cena

Cena has a drumline playing him to the ring which is pretty awesome. After some big match intros we're ready to go. Orton immediately blasts HHH with the belt but Cena takes the champion down with a bulldog before Orton can do any more damage. HHH pops back up and throws both guys to the floor before sending Orton into the announce table. Orton and HHH head back in with the champion being put in a sleeper. Cena comes back in and picks them BOTH up at the same time for an FU but both guys slip off

the back. Orton's backbreaker puts HHH down as does a shot to Cena to give the champion control again.

Randy takes turns pounding away on both guys, getting two off a knee drop to the Game. Orton starts getting uncharacteristic for himself by going up top, only to be stopped by Cena. John loads up a superplex but HHH pulls Cena onto his own shoulders so Orton can hit a top rope cross body for two. Cena stands up to try the FU on Orton but Randy slides into a cradle for two. HHH clotheslines Cena down but Orton clotheslines HHH to put HHH down.

It's Orton standing tall again as he sends both guys to the apron for a double Elevated DDT which gets two on both challengers. An RKO to Cena is countered but he shoves Orton into HHH to put both guys down. Cena hits the Throwback (a flipping face first mat slam) and the top rope Fameasser to keep Randy down. He isn't down enough for the STFU though and the champion rolls to the floor. Cena follows him and is sent into the post to slow things down again.

Orton and HHH fight it out in the ring with HHH taking out the champion's knee. Cena comes back in to distract HHH but after the Game puts him down, Orton catches him with an RKO to put him right next to Cena. Orton kicks HHH to the floor but walks into the STFU in the middle of the ring. HHH makes a save at the last second and sends Cena into the floor to put him down on the floor.

Back in and HHH puts on an Indian Deathlock to follow up on the knee work he started earlier. Now it's Cena back in to break up the hold and send HHH into the corner and out to the floor. Back to the STFU but HHH comes in for the save. The problem is that the save didn't work, so HHH puts Cena in a Crossface while Cena has Orton in the STFU. Cena lets go of his hold but manages to crawl over to the ropes to break up the hold.

Orton rolls to the floor so HHH and Cena can slug it out in the middle of the ring. The fans boo Cena's punches and cheer HHH's, continuing a trend for whomever Cena is facing. Cena slams HHH down and hits the Shuffle but Cena's FU is countered into a Pedigree attempt which is countered into an STFU attempt this HHH escapes. The spinebuster puts John down and there's

the Pedigree, but Orton comes back in with the Punt to HHH to knock him silly and Orton pins Cena to retain.

Rating: B. This was a fast paced match with all three guys working hard out there in front of a huge crowd. The back and forth stuff worked very well and it wasn't clear who was going to win until the match was over. Orton getting beaten up and winning while stealing HHH's pin is perfect for him, as well as giving him the big win on the big stage that he needed.

We recap Big Show vs. Floyd Mayweather which is the big celebrity match of the night. Big Show was a bully to the much smaller Mayweather at No Way Out where Floyd legitimately broke Show's nose with a right hand, setting up tonight's No DQ match. The big question was who do we cheer for in this match? The bully or the guy who keeps running his mouth and brags about how no one can beat him? That question was never answered even after the match was over. Mayweather allegedly got \$20 million for this one match. He's a world champion boxer if you're not a fan of his.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Big Show

You can by pin, submission or knockout. Other than that anything goes. Floyd is in gloves which would seem to be a disadvantage for him but whatever. He bobs and weaves a lot before firing off some nice punches to Big Show. Mayweather stops for a drink from a chalice (seriously) and Show beats up Mayweather's team a bit. Show grabs an incoming punch and tries to stomp on Floyd's hand. Smart strategy.

Show lifts him up for a chokeslam but that lets Floyd get on even level with Show's head. Some rights to the face stagger show but Mayweather tries to choke him out, which actually works for a bit. Show finally flips him over and steps on Floyd's left hand. The guys on the floor FREAK and say that's not allowed before Show chops Mayweather in the corner. Show stands on Floyd's back before putting him down with a side slam.

A headbutt stops Floyd's comeback bid and there's an elbow drop for good measure. Mayweather tries to bail but Big Show chases the team down, beats them up, and throws Floyd back in the ring. Show loads up the

chokeslam but a handler hits Show with a chair. He gets chokeslammed down but Mayweather gets the chair and blasts Show with it a few times. A low blow and three chair shots to the head sets up a brass knuckle right hand to Show's jaw for the knockout (and Show was on his knees at 9).

Rating: C+. This is one of those matches where all you can say is "well what else were you expecting?" Again though, who was I supposed to cheer for? The giant bully, or the loud bragging guy who used chairs and brass knuckles to win? Like I said, the story was head scratch inducing, but this was tremendous fun.

Wrestlemania is coming back to Houston next year.

Kim Kardashian announces the new attendance record: 74,635.

We get a video on the Streak which is interrupted by Edge's theme music. Edge already beat Undertaker once by cashing in MITB last year and then costing him the title at Survivor Series. They're trying to play up Streak vs. streak here but Edge lost in MITB last year.

Smackdown World Title: Undertaker vs. Edge

Edge has Teddy wheel out Vickie who is in a wheelchair as always. The Canadian is defending here. The champ pounds away to start but gets clotheslined out to the floor. Back in and Taker comes back with a Stunner onto the top rope to put Edge down. Taker slugs away but charges into a boot in the corner, only to come back with the jumping clothesline for two. Old School is countered but Taker rolls forward and armdrags Edge down.

Edge sends Taker over the corner by avoiding a big boot, possibly injuring Taker's arm in the process. A spear sends Taker off the apron and into the barricade to work over the ribs a bit. Edge hits a hard baseball slide to send Taker back into the barricade as the match slows down a bit. With Undertaker on the apron, Edge hits a running neckbreaker to snap Undertaker's neck across the top rope.

Back in and Edge pounds away even more before hitting a spear into the corner for no cover. Instead it's a dropkick to put Taker down again and

Edge goes up, only to be shoved down to the floor with a sick thud. There's the Taker Dive to continue the Wrestlemania tradition. Taker drops the apron legdrop and heads back inside for the Last Ride but his back won't let him use it.

They head outside again and Edge drops Taker back first onto the barricade, sending the big man into the crowd. Off to a half crab by Edge followed by a very modified Indian Deathlock which Undertaker kicks away. Back up and they slug it out with Taker getting control and the cheers from Undertaker. The challenger gets the better of it and hits a running clothesline in the corner. Make it a pair of them followed by snake eyes but the big boot is blocked for two by Edge.

The chokeslam is countered into the Impaler DDT for two. The second chokeslam attempt works but it only gets a near fall as well. Old School is broken up again and Edge pounds away in the corner but has to counter the Last Ride out of the corner with a neckbreaker for two. These counters are getting awesome. The Last Ride (more of a regular powerbomb here) hits but it only gets two. Edge counters the Tombstone into the Edge-0-Matic for ANOTHER close two. The fans aren't buying Edge's near falls.

Back up and Taker's big boot hits the referee before Edge takes down the Dead Man. A low blow breaks up a chokeslam bid and Edge blasts Taker in the head with a camera. Taker sits up and like a dolt, Edge tries a Tombstone. Taker reverses into one of his own and here's another referee running a LONG way down the aisle to count two. Cue Hawkins and Ryder (as in Curt and Zack, the Edgeheads) to distract Taker and let Edge hit the spear for two. NOW the fans are fired up about the kickout. Another spear connects but Taker grabs the Hell's Gate submission out of nowhere and Edge taps away the title to make it 15-0.

Rating: A. I kept hearing about how great this match was and while I remember it being good, I don't remember it being this good. It's pretty safe to say that this is Edge's best non-gimmick match ever and it's one of his best ever period. Great match here and it would set up a series of solid gimmick matches between the two over the summer.

A lot of fireworks end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. There's some very good stuff on here along with some historic stuff to go with it. The bad stuff is mostly short and the main event was very solid and better than I remember. I don't know if I'd say it's one of the best ever but it's in the running for that list. Really fun show here which was better than I was expecting it to be.

Ratings Comparison

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Finlay

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Shelton Benjamin vs. CM Punk vs. Carlito vs. Chris Jericho vs. MVP vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. John Morrison

Original: B

Redo: B

Batista vs. Umaga

Original: F+

Redo: D-

Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Ric Flair vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: B

Beth Phoenix/Melina vs. Maria/Ashley

Original: F

Redo: F+

John Cena vs. HHH vs. Randy Orton

Original: C+

Redo: B

Floyd Mayweather vs. Big Show

Original: D-

Redo: C+

Edge vs. Undertaker

Original: A-

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: A-

WOW I totally shortchanged this last time. It's a great show and I said a C-? What was I on?

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/31/583/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XX: The Best Triple Threat Ever

Wrestlemania XX

Date: March 14, 2004

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 20,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Tazz, Michael Cole

We're back where it all started so it can all begin again. I'm not sure what that means either but it's the tag line of the show. The main event tonight is a triple threat match because what would a WWE show be without one of those? It's HHH defending the title against Chris Benoit and Shawn Michaels, the latter of whom is here for absolutely no reason whatsoever. The other big match is Eddie Guerrero defending his newly won world title against Kurt Angle. There are some young guys getting their first Manai match tonight as well. Let's get to it.

The Harlem Boys Choir sings America the Beautiful.

We get a shot of Vince standing in the dark before going into a video on the last twenty years of Wrestlemania which is a pretty cool sight. This transitions into a very serious video about everyone talking about how huge this match is for them. We hear that it all begins again tonight, transitioning to a shot of Vince's newborn granddaughter. Cool idea.

US Title: John Cena vs. Big Show

Cena is challenging here and this is the culmination of a feud that lasted a few months. Show held the title for five months and defended it

like three times. Cena does a rap before the match and is just INSANELY over. In New York. My how times have changed. Cena says Show can't see him so Big shoves him into the corner. Show throws him to the floor but Cena guillotines him as they come back in. A cross body (why would you try that on Big Show?) is countered into a slam for two and the match slows down a lot.

The fans cheer for Cena as Show chops him in the corner. Cena comes back with some right hands but Show clotheslines him down with ease. Show stands on the bottom rope to crush it into Cena's throat before a vertical suplex gets two. The champion stands on Cena's back for good measure and drops a leg for two. Show tries a powerslam but gets caught in a sleeper, but the powers of fat break it up pretty easily.

There's the cobra clutch by the champion for good measure but the fans applaud Cena to freedom. The hold goes right back on though and Cena is in more trouble. John slugs his way out again and gets a boot up to stop a charging Big Show. The FU hits but Show is out just a second after the two count. Since that didn't work, Cena wraps a chain around his hand but when the referee takes them away, Cena gets brass knuckles to stun Big Show before a second FU gives him his first of many titles.

Rating: C. Slow match but this was a good choice for an opener. The fans were WAY into Cena as he was rapidly becoming the hottest thing in the company (until the rise of Batista of course). The FU was a great visual to open things up as fans are always going to react to freakish displays of strength like that. Good opener here and the fans are hotter than they already were, which is the right idea.

Coach is in the back talking to various people before going in to see Eric Bischoff. Eric sends him to find Undertaker.

Evolution (minus HHH of course) talks about taking out Mick Foley tonight and we get a clip of Orton kicking Foley down a flight of stairs 10 months ago to start the feud. They just happen to be in front of the same stairs, which is a great touch. Instead of having them show us the stairs in a photo, it adds atmosphere which is missing in most promos today. We see Foley walking away from Orton over the months and Evolution

destroying Foley over the same months. Tonight it's Rock teaming with Foley against Evolution in a handicap match which should be AWESOME. Really good package here on the match too.

Raw Tag Titles: La Resistance vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Garrison Cade/Mark Jindrak vs. Booker T/Rob Van Dam

Booker and RVD are defending and this is one fall to a finish. Booker has an AWFUL remix of his song here so hopefully they drop the belts so we don't have to hear it again. Van Dam and Dupree get us going with Rob monkey flipping him down. Booker comes in with a side kick for two and a hip toss for an interfering Conway. Rene is knocked into the Dudley corner for a tag off to Bubba with the Dudley getting two off a neckbreaker. Booker comes back with a side kick but D-Von tags himself in before the cover. RVD jumps in with a kick to the face of D-Von but there was no tag so it's Jindrak vs. Booker instead.

Cade and Jindrak take over on Booker in the corner but Rene steals a tag to take over. This match needs to end already. We're four minutes in and I'm already bored. Conway hooks a bow and arrow hold which goes on WAY longer than needed. Booker fights out with a spinebuster for no cover but it's not hot tag to RVD. Everything breaks down but D-Von breaks up the Five Star. It's Booker vs. D-Von but Cade breaks up 3D. The scissors kick and Five Star are enough to pin Conway and retain the titles.

Rating: D. Sacre bleu what a waste of my time. No one card about this match because the tag division was so dead at this point that almost every team was just thrown together. Since this is Wrestlemania though, there's ANOTHER four way tag match later tonight. Nothing to see here and the match sucked on all levels. Let's get on to ANYTHING else.

Coach is in the back again and hears noises coming from a closet. He opens the door to find a disheveled Gene Okerlund and Bobby Heenan with an unbuttoned shirt. Coach thinks there's something going on between the two of them but Heenan says there was a poker game going on. Moolah and Mae Young come out of the same closet and drag the guys back in. Heenan screams for help and Coach shakes his head. When I said ANYTHING else, I didn't mean THAT.

We recap Christian vs. Jericho which is a pretty awesome story. Month ago Christian and Jericho made a bet for \$1 Canadian that Jericho could sleep with Trish before Christian could sleep with Lita. Jericho wound up falling for Trish but she found out about the bet. He's spent months begging for her forgiveness but Christian got tired of hearing Jericho whining like this.

Trish agreed to just be friends but Christian started hitting on her. Bischoff made Christian vs. Trish with Christian agreeing to lay down for her. Christian decided to show some tough love by putting her in the Walls of Jericho, setting up Christian vs. Jericho tonight with Jericho fighting for the honor of his love. This is one of my favorite feuds.

Christian vs. Chris Jericho

They lock up to start with Jericho getting very aggressive and taking Christian down by the hair. A belly to back suplex gets two for Jericho and he backdrops Christian over the top and out to the floor. Chris hits a big spring plancha but can't hook the Walls back inside. Christian sends Jericho over the top and out to the floor in a big crash. Back in and Christian chokes away before slapping his own chest a bit. A knee to Jericho's ribs gets two and it's off to a neck crank.

Christian pulls some of Jericho's hair out for good measure before covering. Off to a chinlock with a knee in Chris' back but it's quickly broken up into another failed Walls attempt. A forearm puts Christian down and there's a running crotch attack to Christian in 619 position. The running enziguri gets two for Jericho before they trade rollups for two each. A northern lights suplex gets two for Chris but the bulldog sets up the Lionsault which hits knees.

Jericho charges into an elbow into the corner and gets taken down by a reverse tornado DDT for two. The reverse DDT into a backbreaker puts Jericho down again but Christian goes up and gets crotched. He blocks a superplex though and hits a top rope cross body, only for Jericho to roll through for two. This is solid stuff so far. Christian kicks Jericho in his injured knee and puts on the old school Texas Cloverleaf. In an impressive counter, Jericho gets underneath Christian and rolls through

into the Walls but AGAIN Christian makes the ropes.

Jericho takes it to the floor and puts on the Walls out there before having to break the count. Back in and a butterfly superplex gets a VERY close two on Christian as Trish comes bouncing down the aisle. An inverted DDT puts Chris down for two and Christian spots Trish. He drags her into the ring but Jericho makes the save. Not being able to see though, Trish blasts Jericho in the face, allowing Christian to hook a quick rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. As I said I'm a bit fan of this match and the angle that went along with it. This was Christian's best singles match to date and he looked perfectly capable of hanging with a more talented guy like Jericho. Trish of course would play a much bigger role just after the match, so let's get to the interesting part.

Post match Trish apologizes to Jericho before slapping him, turning into EVIL Trish. Christian lays out Jericho and leaves with the girl. Evil Trish was SMOKING hot and we would get to see a lot more of her as this feud continued for months.

Mick Foley talks about the emotion of being back in New York but Rock interrupts him. He says that FINALLY they're back here and Mick Foley is home. Rock hijacks the camera and finds Rosey and Hurricane eating hamburgers and Jimmy Snuka and Don Muraco just hanging out. Rock sends the cameraman into the arena to get a shot of the people but has him come back because it's Rock N Sock's night.

Evolution vs. The Rock/Mick Foley

It's Flair/Orton/Batista here and Orton is Intercontinental Champion. The brawl is on to start with Rock fighting the young guys and Flair getting punched by Foley. Evolution is knocked out to the floor until we start with Rock vs. Flair. Rock immediately elbows him down and does the Flair strut to send Naitch to the floor. A backdrop puts Flair down and they fight to the floor, only to have Ric get caught in another backdrop. Foley drops an elbow off the apron and Evolution is in trouble to start.

Foley wants to come in to face Orton but Randy immediately bails to the

floor to great heat. We finally get inside for the fight that people want to see as Foley pounds away and puts Orton in the Tree of Woe. Off to Rock who punches Orton in the "stomach" before clotheslining him down for no cover. Ric gets clipped in the back of the head by Flair which draws him into the corner, sending the fight to the floor. Batista drops Rock face first onto the barricade to take over.

Back in and Batista pounds on Rock, dropping him down with an elbow for two. Flair comes in again to chop at Rock before going up with even Lawler making fun of Flair for it never working. Big Dave comes in again to pound on Rock but the Brahma Bull gets over to the corner to bring in Foley. Mick pounds away on Batista and punches him down in the corner, only to be taken down by Batista's big running clothesline. Foley goes after Orton on the floor but Flair jumps him to stop the comeback.

As is his custom, Flair is sent knees first into the steps, causing some cringing pain. Back in and Orton drops knees on Foley's head before it's back to Flair for a hard chop. That's all for Ric right now and it's back to Orton for a reverse chinlock. Batista takes Orton's place and pounds away with rights and lefts, only to be caught in a quick Mandible Claw. Batista escapes but gets caught in a swinging neckbreaker. That's STILL not enough for the hot tag to Rock though, and the crowd continues to want it more and more. A quick right hand to Flair is enough for the tag to Rock though, and the reaction isn't all that great.

Rock cleans house with everything he can but walks into a spinebuster by Batista. Instead of a cover though, we get the People's Elbow from Naitch, complete with strut! The elbow doesn't have a chance to be launched though as Rock nips up and pounds away on Flair with right hands. The spinebuster sets up the real Elbow with Rock strutting for two. Another tag brings in Orton who walks right into a Rock Bottom for two. The big clothesline puts Rock down and there's the Batista Bomb for good measure.

That gets two for Randy but Rock drops him again, allowing for the tag to Foley and there's the pop we were waiting for. Evolution is knocked down and there's the double arm DDT to Orton. Mr. Socko returns but Orton SNAPS off an RKO for the pin out of nowhere. The look of shock on Orton's

face and Foley getting up and three and a half and looking around as if to say "what happened" are great touches.

Rating: B. Very solid match here with all five guys feeling it at Wrestlemania. The ending is perfect and makes Orton look all the better as he got the fall on a fresh Foley with the RKO out of nowhere. This led to a great match at Backlash which cemented Orton as a player. This was also Rock's last match for seven and a half years. Great match though and well worth checking out for a lesson in how to give a perfect rub.

Foley gets a standing ovation and Rock is just kind of there. Again, they don't steal the spotlight, making it clear that Evolution is the important group here. Very well done.

We get some clips from the Hall of Fame induction ceremony last night which is the first class inducted in eight years. Heenan wishing Monsoon was there still makes me smile.

Here's Gene Okerlund to introduce the Hall of Fame class. The class includes Bobby Heenan (good ovation), Tito Santana (should get a bigger ovation), Big John Studd (represented by his son), Harley Race (the pop starts before Gene can even speak), Pete Rose (booed, although I've heard he was as humble as you could ask anyone to be), Don Muraco (polite applause), Greg Valentine (bigger ovation than I expected), Junkyard Dog (represented by his daughter), Billy Graham (biggest pop so far), Sgt. Slaughter (decent pop) and Jesse Ventura (solid pop). Next year's class had Hogan in it to give the thing some credibility.

Sable/Torrie Wilson vs. Miss Jackie/Stacy Keibler

This is an evening gown match and the annual Playboy promotional match. Sable and Torrie posed together and had a teased lesbian angle around this time. Sable wants to just wrestle sans clothes but Jackie (Gayda, as in the attractive one) says no. Everyone else winds up in lingerie and Jackie is soon stripped too. This is exactly what you would expect: annoying announcers, sexual spots, very little wrestling and very little complaining from most fans. Stacy kicks Torrie's head off for two and it's back to Jackie. We get the rolling over the referee spot and Torrie rolls up Jackie for the pin. This was what it was.

We hear from some fans who are excited to be here.

Eddie comes in to see Benoit but Benoit doesn't want to hear about how big of a night this is. Guerrero of course talks about all the pressure on Benoit but Benoit says he believes in himself and that he's never been more ready. Eddie says Benoit needs to have fire in his eyes and it finally comes out, so Eddie is very happy.

Cruiserweight Title: Cruiserweight Open

Chavo Guerrero, Ultimo Dragon, Shannon Moore, Akio, Tajiri, Jamie Noble, Funaki, Rey Mysterio, Billy Kidman, Nunzio

This is different from what the Cruiserweight Open would wind up being when it was a free for all. This is basically a gauntlet match with everyone at ringside and two guys starting. It's elimination rules and last man standing is champion. Chavo comes in defending and gets to come in tenth for no apparent reason. We start with Moore vs. Dragon who fight over a hammerlock. Moore tries to speed things up but gets caught in a standing Sliced Bread for a fast pin. I now remember why I hate gauntlet matches.

Jamie Noble is in next and after avoiding a moonsault, he hooks a neckbreaker and a guillotine choke to put Dragon out. Funaki comes in and gets small packaged for the pin less in about three seconds. Nunzio is in and takes Noble to the mat in a hurry before being sent out to the floor. Noble hits a sweet flip dive off the top to the floor and rams Nunzio into the apron for a countout. Billy Kidman is in next but Nunzio trips him up. Noble heads to the floor as Kidman slides back inside for a Shooting Star off the top to take both guys out.

Back in and Kidman breaks up the guillotine choke and enziguris Noble down. The Shooting Star is broken up but Kidman hits a BK Bomb (D'Lo Brown's Sky High) for the elimination. Mysterio (as the Flash this year) comes in with a springboard seated senton but gets dropkicked down for two for Kidman. Billy loads up something off the top but gets caught in a sunset bomb for the pin. Mysterio vs. Tajiri now as Rey is caught in the Tarantula. Mysterio will have none of this selling stuff and there's the 619 but Tajiri kicks him down.

Akio gets on the apron but gets caught in the Green Mist, which means he's out for no apparent reason (my guess is they're out of time) so here's Chavo vs. Mysterio which is what this whole match should have been in the first place. Tajiri gets in a cheap shot on Mysterio and it's Guerrero in control early. Rey comes back with a headscissors and a baseball slide to Chavo Senior. There's a big dive onto an old man to pop the crowd (New York is mean!) but as Mysterio comes back in with a sunset flip, Chavo Jr. drops down and has Senior's help for the pin on Mysterio to retain.

Rating: D. What am I supposed to get into off of this match? The longest fall was maybe two minutes in length and none of them were anything of note. The match should have just been Rey vs. Chavo, but because of the annoying Wrestlemania payday, we need to jam in eight other guys to ruin the match. Also this brings up the universal problem with these matches: if it's possible to get all these two minute pins, why do matches usually last five times or so as long?

We recap Brock vs. Goldberg which started at the Rumble. Goldberg wasn't impressed by Lesnar so Brock interfered in the Rumble and tossed Goldberg out. Austin left Goldberg a ticket for No Way Out where Lesnar defended the title against Eddie Guerrero. As you can guess, Goldberg cost him the title and tonight it's about revenge. Brock blamed Austin for the loss and stole his ATV which Austin got back. Austin is also guest referee tonight to keep the match from falling apart.

Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg

The catch here is that both guys are leaving and the fans know it, so they boo them both out of the building. Goldie gets his full entrance from the back. The fans IMMEDIATELY start chanting YOU SOLD OUT at Lesnar who is going to the NFL after this match. They circle each other and Austin says get to it. Now the fans sing the GOODBYE song with the guys still making zero contact over a minute in. The fans chant for the referee as Goldberg looks at Austin. Still no contact. After nearly THREE MINUTES of circling each other they lock up.

Amusingly enough, Goldberg is said to have an advantage because he's a

mixed martial arts aficionado. They lock up and shove each other away as it's almost four minutes in without even a punch being thrown. We get a second lockup with the same result. The crowd is booing loudly now. Literally five minutes in Lesnar grabs a headlock for the first actual move of the match. They trade shoulder blocks with no one going anywhere. They collide again with both guys going down and we're somehow six minutes into this match.

Now they stare at each other as the fans are about to riot. The fans cheer for HOGAN of all people and that's FINALLY enough to get something going. Goldberg presses him over his head and drops him into a kind of spinebuster for two. The spear misses though and Goldberg hits the buckle chest first. The fans think Goldberg sucks as he is sent into the post. Back in and Brock gets two off a suplex and then hooks a modified headlock. The fans chant for Hogan again.

Back to the same headlock after a brief break before they collide again. Brock gets two as Austin is still a complete non factor. He seems to be the rodeo clown out there to keep everything from falling apart. Well, falling completely apart because we're long past falling apart. JR is polite and calls this match pedestrian. Goldberg comes back with some clotheslines and a swinging neckbreaker of all things as the Hogan chant starts again. There's the spear for two but Goldie spends too much time arguing with Austin and walks into an F5 for two. Brock tries a spear but misses, so a spear and Jackhammer can finish Brock.

Rating: E. As in embarrassing, which is what this was. Have some pride out there people. I know you're leaving and the fans don't care, but man alive have some effort out there. If I was an NFL team and Brock gave that kind of a performance I wouldn't want anything to do with him. No he doesn't want to be there but that's his job until his contract expires. This was embarrassing to watch and they deserve the booing they received. Austin added nothing here but he didn't really need to.

Post match Brock flips off Austin and gets Stunned for his efforts. Goldberg has a beer and gets Stunned for good measure.

Wrestlemania 21 is in Los Angeles.

Vince actually comes out and thanks the fans for getting us here and hopes they'll be there in the future. Cool moment there.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Too Cool vs. Basham Brothers vs. World's Greatest Tag Team vs. APA

That would be Scotty and Rikishi who are defending coming in. One fall to a finish again. Bradshaw and Shelton start things off with the Texan taking him down with a shoulder and getting two off an elbow drop. Doug Basham comes in to beat up Shelton now and it's off to Danny. Shelton tags in Haas for a slam onto Haas' knee in a cool spot. Scotty comes in to fight Charlie as this is going nowhere.

In another creative spot, Scotty skins the cat but lands in the Shelton jumps over Charlie's back to land on Scotty for two. Charlie tags off to Doug for a kick to Scotty's face. The hot tag brings in Rikishi to clean house and knocks Shelton to the floor to break up the German suplex. Charlie gets a Stinkface and Bradshaw launches Doug to the floor with a fallaway slam. There's the Clothesline to Danny but Bradshaw walks into a Samoan Drop. Rikishi sits on Danny to end it and retain.

Rating: D. Whatever man. Seriously, I wouldn't have remembered this match if you put a gun to my head, just like with the other tag title match. They're just not interesting at all and there was nothing here to remember at all. There needed to be just one set of tag belts at this point and these matches make it painfully obvious.

Rikishi and Scotty dance for old times' sake.

Edge is returning soon.

Jesse Ventura interviews Donald Trump, who is at like his fifth Wrestlemania. Ventura implies they'll run for the White House together.

Molly Holly (looking GREAT here with the shoulder length dark hair) is excited about her hair vs. title match against Victoria. This can't end well.

Women's Title: Molly Holly vs. Victoria

Victoria is defending and Molly has her hair on the line. The champion has the awesome All The Things She Said as her theme song as is looking sweet in white here. They lock up to start and Molly pounds her down before whipping Victoria into the corner. Victoria nips up off the mat and sends Molly to the floor but loses control soon thereafter. Back in again as the match is already going slowly.

A low dropkick gets two on Victoria and it's off to a reverse cravate by Molly. A quick rollup gets two for Victoria as JR says he doesn't wear underwear. Victoria powerslams her down for two but Molly heads up a few seconds later. An attempted superplex is countered into a slow motion sunset bomb for two for Molly. A backslide out of nowhere retains the title for Victoria, meaning it's time to see a bald Holly.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here other than both girls looking incredibly cute. As is usually the case, there's no explanation given for why this match is happening, nore does anyone seem interested in telling us. Molly would get a wig soon after this which admittedly was pretty amusing. Nothing to the match which didn't even last five minutes.

Molly tries to put Victoria into the barber's chair post match but can't get the clippers to work. The champion fights back and lays Molly out for the haircut.

We recap Eddie vs. Angle. Eddie, as a former drug addict, has no business being champion according to Kurt. Guerrero is also in WAY over his head because of how good Angle is. Heyman, the Smackdown GM, hates Eddie for no apparent reason on top of that.

Post video, Molly is VERY bald.

Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero

Feeling out process to start with Eddie taking Angle to the mat in a surprising development. Angle sits out and the fans applaud what they see. Angle takes over with a headlock but Eddie reverses into one of his own. A shoulder block puts Eddie down and he isn't sure what to do from here. Now the champion grabs a headlock followed by three straight shoulders to knock Angle down. Kurt bails to the floor for a breather.

Back in and Eddie takes him down with an armdrag but Angle takes control again with a sweet amateur move into a front facelock. Eddie comes out of it with a series of armdrags into an armbar as the fans applaud again. Guerrero switches over to a keylock but Angle shoves him off and drives a knee into the ribs to take over. Like any good ring general, he follows up on an injured body part with an abdominal stretch.

Eddie rolls out and tries Three Amigos but gets countered into a German instead. Eddie gets thrown to the apron but Angle slides through the ropes and tries the German off the apron but Guerrero escapes because it would, you know, kill him. Back inside and Eddie dropkicks Angle back to the floor as things slow down a bit. Guerrero tries to dive off the top to take Angle out but lands ribs first on the barricade. That's adding to the story they started with the ribs, making it awesome.

Back inside and a backbreaker gets two for Angle and it's off to a body vice on the champion. Eddie fights up but gets dropped ribs first on the top rope for two. Angle unleashes the suplexes again with an overhead release belly to belly for no cover. There's another one for two and it's back to the body grip. Another belly to belly gets another near fall as Angle is getting frustrated. Angle puts him on the top but gets shoved off as a result. A fast Frog Splash attempt misses though and Eddie's ribs are in big trouble.

Angle punches Eddie to send Cole into a frenzy because Michael Cole is an authority on ethics all of a sudden. Eddie gets up and says HIT ME AGAIN so Angle does just that. Guerrero grabs a fast suplex for two but Angle escapes a second before rolling the Germans. Eddie counters the second one into a rollup for two but Angle takes Eddie's head off with a clothesline to stop him again.

The champion escapes the Angle Slam with an armdrag and starts doing his Latino dance. He STILL can't hit the Three Amigos though as Angle counters into the ankle lock. Eddie kicks him away and dropkicks Kurt down before heading up. Angle pops up again and runs the ropes for the belly to belly, putting both guys down again. Kurt takes the straps down and puts on the ankle lock but Eddie rolls out into a cradle for two.

Another German suplex puts Guerrero down again but the champion counters the Angle Slam into a DDT. Now the Frog Splash hits for a VERY close two. When I watched this the first time I thought that was it. Eddie isn't sure what to do and gets caught in the ankle lock as a result. He almost taps but manages to swing Angle out to the floor. Eddie unlaces his boot with Kurt down on the floor to relieve some pressure. Guerrero crawls away as Kurt gets back in and lets him pick the ankle. Eddie kicks Angle away, losing his boot in the process. Angle is confused and Eddie small packages him to retain in a brilliant move.

Rating: A. Great match here with the psychology flowing freely. Eddie was BRILLIANT out there as he had finally took it away from the wrestling game and got Angle out of his comfort zone. The dueling rolling suplexes were a great touch too as neither guy could hit them but it was a battle to try. Great match and well worth checking out.

We recap Kane vs. Undertaker. Other than their huge history dating back over six years, Kane had helped literally bury Undertaker at Survivor Series in a buried alive match. At Wrestlemania, the gong went off to scare Undertaker and he's back tonight as the Dead Man for the first time in four and a half years.

Kane vs. Undertaker

The visual on Kane's entrance is really cool as the set is designed to look like New York City and it has fire all over it as Kane comes out. Sweet. The lights go out and we get Paul Bear's Ooooooooooooooooooooooh YEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEES. Since this is Wrestlemania, we get druids, smoke, and torches. Now we get thunder and lightning and a gong, which gives us the Undertaker. He has shorter hair now which would be his look for the next eight years or so. The entrance, as always, is excellent.

Kane shouts that Undertaker isn't real and reaches out to touch him, earning the right hands from Undertaker. Undertaker calls for the chokeslam but Kane runs out to the floor. Taker is fine with that and the brawl heads to the floor with the Dead Man in full control. There's the apron legdrop and we head back inside for a running clothesline in the corner. All Undertaker so far as JR actually tries to push this as a

brand vs. brand match. Taker loads up the Last Ride but gets backdropped into the ropes in an awkward looking spot.

Kane chokes away on the mat and talks trash about telling Undertaker to not come back. Undertaker comes back with rights and lefts, only to walk into the side slam. The top rope clothesline crushes Undertaker for a close two. Kane misses a charge in the corner and there's a big boot to put Kane down. Taker follows it up with a legdrop (BROTHER) and Old School for good measure. Scratch that actually as Kane catches him by the throat and hits the chokeslam. Kane laughs maniacally but Taker sits up to a BIG ovation. The Taker chokeslam and tombstone make Taker I believe 12-0.

Rating: D+. Yeah the match sucked but this was all about the moment and making it clear that Undertaker was back. That worked like a charm here and the match worked quite well for what it was supposed to be. This would of course lead to Paul Bearer being locked in a tomb made of concrete. You don't see the connection?

We recap the main event. HHH is world champion because he's HHH, Benoit won the Rumble and switched brands, and Shawn is here because he's a whiny little man that can't accept that he didn't win at the Rumble. Therefore he superkicked Benoit and signed Benoit's contract, which apparently you can just do and have it be legally binding. The solution was to make a triple threat match because that's what WWE does.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit

HHH (and his big white boots) bail to the floor as the other two chop it out. They head to the mat with Benoit bridging up into a backslide attempt but Shawn blocks. The Crossface doesn't work but Benoit gets two off a northern lights suplex. The Game comes back in to take over and he slugs both guys down. Shawn is thrown over the top rope for some skinning of the cat but comes back in to pound away at the champion in the corner.

The high knee takes Shawn down for two and a less high knee puts Benoit on the floor. Benoit has his back rammed into the barricade but Shawn baseball slides both of them onto the concrete. That is followed up by a big moonsault to the floor to take out all three guys and wow the crowd a

bit. Shawn and HHH go back inside but Benoit has to come in with a clothesline to break up a Pedigree. Shawn goes shoulder first into the post at the hands of the Canadian but HHH ties Benoit up in the Tree of Woe.

Michaels whips HHH into Benoit and rolls up the champion for two before nipping up, only to be clotheslined out to the floor by Benoit. Chris rolls some Germans on the champion but Shawn comes back to break up the Swan Dive. HHH DDTs Shawn down and superplexes Benoit for a pair of two's. Benoit gets a weak Crossface on HHH but Michaels makes the save. Now Shawn tries to roll Germans on Benoit but you can't do that to a Canadian (without being Kurt Angle of course), and Benoit reverses into Germans of his own on Shawn.

The Swan Dive hits Shawn for two as HHH makes another save. HHH low bridges Benoit to the floor and it's time for DX to fight again. Shawn drops the top rope elbow on HHH and there's Sweet Chin Music for good measure but it only gets two. Benoit makes the save and it's time to chop a Canadian. Michaels has to fight off the Sharpshooter but can't avoid a catapult into the post. There's the Crossface on Shawn but HHH grabs Shawn's hand to prevent tapping. That catapult into the post busted Shawn open too.

Out to the floor they go with HHH whipping Benoit into the steps to put him down. HHH loads up the announce table but Benoit fights him onto said table. Benoit fights out of a Pedigree attempt but here's Shawn on the table as well. A double suplex/slam sends Benoit flying through a table and it's down to one on one for all intents and purposes. HHH pounds away on Shawn in the corner but gets backdropped out to the floor, taking out the referee in the process. Shawn sends him into the post to bust the champion open too.

Back in and HHH hits a Pedigree out of nowhere but he's too exhausted to cover. Eventually he does but Benoit pops in to break it up at the last second. Shawn falls out to the floor as Benoit chops the champion. The Pedigree is countered into the Sharpshooter but Shawn comes back in with Sweet Chin Music to break it up, but only for two. Michaels tunes up the band again but misses the superkick and gets backdropped to the floor.

Benoit hooks the Crossface on HHH and holds onto it even as Benoit rolls into the middle of the ring until HHH taps out, giving Benoit the world title.

Rating: A+. I can't stand triple threat matches but this is a masterpiece. They were so crisp with everything and while Shawn didn't need to be there at all, it was still an excellent match. Benoit winning was the absolutely right decision (and would have been the year before as well) but it was the feel good moment they needed.

Eddie comes out to celebrate with his friend as confetti falls to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This show really does hold up quite well. It's not a masterpiece or anything but the two world title matches are must see. Unfortunately that's about all that's must see as this over four hour long show (yes, OVER FOUR HOURS) is in need of some trimming (the tag titles would be a great place to start) but it's still a solid show. The ending scene is hard to watch as the two crumbled under the pressure and ultimately would be gone less than four years later. Still though, the first moment was excellent.

Ratings Comparison

John Cena vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: C

Booker T/Rob Van Dam vs. Garrison Cade/Mark Jindrak vs. Dudley Boys vs. La Resistance

Original: D

Redo: D

Christian vs. Chris Jericho

Original: B

Redo: B

Evolution vs. The Rock/Mick Foley

Original: A

Redo: B

Torrie Wilson/Sable vs. Stacy Keibler/Miss Jackie

Original: F

Redo: N/A

Cruiserweight Open

Original: D+

Redo: D

Goldberg vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: F

Redo: E

Too Cool vs. World's Greatest Tag Team vs. Basham Brothers vs. APA

Original: D

Redo: D

Victoria vs. Molly Holly

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A

Redo: A

Undertaker vs. Kane

Original: D

Redo: D+

Chris Benoit vs. HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B

That's as close to identical as you're going to get.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/27/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-20-where-it-all-begins-again-with-two-dead-guys/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XVI: Make It A Single

Wrestlemania XVI

Date: April 2, 2000

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Attendance: 18,034

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

This is also called Wrestlemania 2000 but the purist in me won't let that happen. This is a step up over last year's one match show as this year we have a two match show. The main event is a fatal fourway elimination match between HHH, the Rock, Big Show and the one night only returning Mick Foley. The other match is Angle vs. Benoit vs. Jericho in a two fall double title match. You might notice a few multi-man matches there and you're going to notice a lot of them tonight. There isn't a single one on one match on the entire card tonight, which might be the only time ever in company history. Let's get to it.

Lillian Garcia sings the national anthem. I've heard her do this live and my goodness can she sing the heck out of that song.

We open with a recap of the previous 15 Wrestlemanias which sounds like it's narrated by a James Earl Jones impersonator.

Godfather/D'Lo Brown vs. Big Boss Man/Bull Buchanan

Ice-T raps Godfather and Brown to the ring. Apparently it's pimp or die, which I think might be taking it a bit too far. Buchanan and Brown get things going to prevent us from having a future RTC matchup. D'Lo tries a quick O'Connor Roll but only gets two. Boss Man tries to come in but gets run over by Godfather. Off to Godfather for a clothesline and the spinning legdrop but an elbow misses.

Godfather gets beaten on for a bit but comes back with a hook kick for

two. Back to Brown who is almost immediately caught by Buchanan for even more pain. D'Lo pounds on Buchanan in the corner as this is going nowhere so far. Of all people, Bull gets things moving a bit better by climbing the corner for a spinning clothesline. Bull puts him in 619 position and both heels slide under the ropes for a double uppercut.

A clothesline gets two more for Bull and everything breaks down for a few seconds. That goes nowhere so we go back to Buchanan pounding on Brown in the corner. Now we keep the excitement going with a bearhug. Boss Man comes in for some double teaming and does his best to get the fans to care at all.

Brown's cross body is caught in a backbreaker for two from both guys but as Buchanan goes up, Godfather crotches him down. Brown comes back with a nice top rope rana to put Buchanan down on the mat, allowing for the hot tag to Godfather. House is cleaned and there's the Ho Train to Boss Man. Bull breaks up the Low Down though, allowing the Boss Man Slam to set up a guillotine legdrop on D'Lo for the pin.

Rating: D+. Who in the world thought this was the right idea for an opening match? They were WAY off base with each other here and the match suffered a lot as a result. This didn't work on almost any level and on top of all that, the popular team loses. The whole point of an opening is to fire up a crowd, so having one of the most over acts in the company lose was a dumb way to start things off. Just a bad match all around.

HHH and Stephanie talk about how awesome their titles are. She's Women's Champion if that wasn't really clear.

We see a conference with the Hardcore Battle Royal participants. Basically it's a huge free for all and not a traditional battle royal. There's a fifteen minute time limit and there can be as many title changes as there needs to be. Basically whoever is the last man standing is champion and the 24/7 rule stops after the last fall.

Hardcore Title: Hardcore Battle Royal

Tazz, Crash Holly, Hardcore Holly, Viscera, Joey Abs, Rodney, Pete Gas, Taka Michinoku, Funaki, Thrasher, Mosh, Faarooq, Bradshaw

Crash is defending coming in. He comes in last and we're ready to go. Remember there's a fifteen minute time limit. Everyone else fights to the floor and Taz hits a fast suplex on Crash for the pin and the title in thirty seconds. So now, only Taz can be pinned for the title. A few seconds later, Viscera hits Taz with a board and gets the title. Now we move into an extended period of hitting people in the head with whatever objects are handy.

We've got thirteen and a half minutes or so to go. Someone uses a box fan on someone else and that's about the most in depth coverage you'll be getting here. Everyone jumps Viscera and hits him with whatever they can find. Crash appears to be busted open. The Acolytes double team the champion and the beatings continue on everyone for a bit. Hardcore and Mosh beat Viscera down and get two each.

We're under ten minutes now and it's fine extinguisher time. There's so much stuff going on it's impossible to call. Viscera heads back into the ring and goes up top (for those of you unfamiliar, Viscera is about Big Show's size), only to be slammed down by the Acolytes. The APA (Acolyte Protection Agency, same team) breaks a board over his back and Bradshaw hits a top rope shoulder to put him down. For no apparent reason they throw Kai En Tai on top of Viscera, giving Funaki the belt.

Funaki, apparently the smartest guy in the match, grabs the belt and runs away. Everyone catches up to him in the back with 7:00 left. Rodney gets a fluke pin out of nowhere for the pin, which I believe is the Posse's first pinfall. Joey suplexes him down and wins the title but Thrasher gets a clothesline and the title. Everyone beats up Thrasher now because it's their job and we come into the arena again. Pete Gas hits Thrasher with a fire extinguisher and wins the title.

Taz gets his hands on the champion and brings him back to ringside for a beating. A t-bone suplex puts the bloody Pete down for the pin and the title with...dang it they took the clock down. Hardcore sends Taz into the steps for two before Mosh takes a shot at him. Taz rolls up Mosh for two on instinct alone. Now it's the Hollys and Taz in the ring and three minutes to go. Crash gets cracked in the head by Taz for two which again means nothing. Hardcore puts Taz down and the cousins fight over a cover.

Two minutes left and both Hollies get two off a powerslam by Hardcore.

We've got a minute left as Hardcore hits the dropkick for two. The champion hits a suplex on Hardcore to send him outside as Crash hits Taz with a trashcan lid for the title. The Tazmission goes on Crash but Hardcore blasts Taz in the head with a candy jar and covers Crash. The ending is screwed up though as Hardcore was supposed to get two but be stopped by the time.

Instead the referee had to stop counting...but Hardcore wins anyway. It made no sense, but either way the important thing here is Taz actually. That jar was made of real glass and when it shattered, some of it got in Taz's eye. Allegedly he was supposed to win the Intercontinental Title but the reign went to Benoit instead.

Rating: B-. What do you want me to say about this? It was exactly what it was supposed to be so I can't complain about it in that regard. They beat the tar out of each other with some funny spots and it was contained in one match instead of a big goofy show long angle like we had two years later. This rating could be all over the place depending on your taste for this stuff.

We look at Axxess over the weekend. Interestingly enough Undertaker is there in the biker attire.

Al Snow talks to someone in a bathroom stall when Steve Blackman comes in and says don't do something stupid. This is during the Head Cheese (Snow and Blackman) attempt at finding Blackman a personality.

Trish is ready in the back.

Head Cheese vs. T&A

Snow brings out Chester McCheeserton, which is a guy in a cheese suit. Snow: "This is better than Shawn on a zipline." That would be Test and Albert (Tensai) with the brand new Trish Stratus as their manager. Test and Blackman start as JR's mic goes out. Test gets kicked down quickly but it's off to Albert who hits a quick splash in the corner for two. Snow comes in for a few seconds but it's quickly back to Steve for a

running shoulder which takes Albert down.

Snow comes in again sans tag with a slingshot legdrop to the back of Albert's head. Blackman breaks up a gorilla press attempt from Albert to give Snow two. Head Cheese double teams Albert as the fans are dying faster and faster by the minute here. Chester annoys Trish as Blackman drops a knee on Albert's crotch. Off to Snow who gets caught in a suplex, allowing for the ice cold tag to Test.

T&A hits a double powerbomb on Snow as JR calls it bowling shoe ugly. Snow hits an Asai Moonsault on Test before the modified Trash Compactor (backbreaker by Blackman/guillotine legdrop from Snow) for two on Test. The match breaks down even more as Albert hits a gorilla press on Blackman before a top rope elbow by Test gets the pin.

Rating: D-. Anything with Trish in an outfit that small can't be a failure, but at the same time this match absolutely sucked. There was NOTHING good going on here and they weren't just on different pages, but rather in different libraries. This was absolutely horrible and one of the worst Mania matches ever.

Post match Head Cheese beats up Chester. You know, because they're good guys!

We get a "comedy" bit based off Austin Powers with Kat being out of her clothes and Mae Young accidentally covering up the good parts.

The Dudleys say they're afraid of heights but they're ready for the triangle ladder match. This is when Bubba still had a stutter.

Tag Titles: Edge and Christian vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Dudley Boyz

The Dudleyz are defending and this is a triangle ladder match rather than a TLC match. That would come in September. This is when Edge and Christian still came through the crowd and somehow hadn't won the tag titles yet. As the Dudleys pose in the aisle on a ladder during their entrance, the Canadians jump the only actual brothers in the match. This is going to be one of those matches that is almost impossible to keep track of. Bubba chops away at Jeff in the ring but gets caught by Whisper

in the Wind. A Bubba Bomb puts Jeff right back down and they all head to the floor.

Christian sets up a ladder in the ring but Matt makes a save. Everyone gets back inside and there's a second ladder. Matt throws one into the corner at Bubba for a sick thud right before D-Von is slammed onto a ladder and hit by a middle rope elbow. Jeff puts Bubba on the ladder but misses a 450, giving us a SICK looking crash. Bubba puts the ladder on top of Jeff and actually hits the middle rope backsplash to crush both of them. Edge rides a ladder out of the corner to crush another ladder onto Matt.

D-Von takes Edge down and all six guys are on the mat or floor now. Bubba is up first and we get the put the ladder around your own neck and spin around in a circle move. Edge and Christian finally dropkick the ladder into Bubba to put him down and there's a double flapjack into the ladder in the corner on D-Von. Christian climbs a ladder and dives onto Matt and Bubba on the floor. This is all happening with almost no breaks in between. Jeff climbs the ladder in the ring but Edge jumps off the top with a spear. That would be topped by about 1000 next year.

Matt hits a crucifix bomb on Edge before trying to climb, only to be slammed down by D-Von. D-Von goes up, only to have Christian throw the ladder at him to bring him down. There are now three ladders set up in the middle of the ring and it's Bubba with a Cutter to Christian off two of them. Awesome looking move there. With Bubba down, the Hardys hit a splash/legdrop combination off the top of the ladders. D-Von tries to climb but the Canadians suplex him off the ladder.

Everyone but the Dudleyz climb up but they all come flying down due to a facebuster and a Russian legsweep in another spot that would be topped next year. The Dudleys are back in now and the fans want tables. Now all six guys climb three ladders and as you can guess, they all go flying down. Christian and Jeff get the worst of it, crashing out to the floor. Bubba lands on his feet and shoves the other two ladders over, leaving him alone in the ring. D-Von is back up too but here's Christian back to his feet, only to get crushed between two ladders.

Edge comes back in and gets caught in the original 3D, with Bubba running for the cutter instead of just standing there. Bubba loads up a table as is his custom and D-Von gets one of his own. There are two ladders set up in the ring and the Dudleys are all alone, but instead of climbing they make a scaffold out of a table between the tops of the ladders. The Hardys get back up to make the save but are easily dispatched. Again the Dudleys screw up though by setting up another table under the scaffold and a third on the floor.

Bubba powerbombs Matt through the one on the floor but D-Von misses a splash through Jeff on one of the tables back in the ring. Jeff tries to run the rail but Bubba pelts him in the face with a ladder. Bubba loads up the super ladder in the aisle before setting up a table in front of it. I can smell wrestling law #1 from here. Jeff comes back and takes Bubba out before putting him on the ladder. In the famous spot from this match, Jeff climbs to the top of the super ladder and hits the Swanton through Bubba through the table to put both of them out.

Back in the ring D-Von suplexes Christian down and goes for a climb but here's Matt to break it up. The Twist of Fate takes D-Von down and now it's Matt and Christian climbing the ladders. They both wind up on the scaffolding that was set up earlier but here's Edge from behind. The brothers throw Matt through the table, allowing Edge and Christian to pull down the belts for their first titles.

Rating: A-. There are two problems with this match. First of all, the match the next year blows it away. Second, and far worse, the last ten minutes were spent setting up spots instead of actually going for the belts. Take the big spot of the match for example. Why in the world would Bubba do that instead of for the sake of doing that spot later? Same with all the other tables set up. There was no logic to doing that, but they did the spots anyway. Still though, excellently fun match.

Mick Foley and Linda McMahon say the main event tonight is the biggest match of all time and thanks to Linda, Mick gets to be in the main event at Wrestlemania. He says fairy tales can come true, one will come true for him.

Terri Runnels vs. The Kat

It's a Catfight, meaning you have to put your opponent on the floor to win. Val Venis is referee and Moolah and Mae are in the respective corners. The referee compares a certain part of himself to Wrestlemania in a promo that would get him chased off by a pitchfork carrying mob in today's world. Venis is in a referee's towel too. Early on he picks up Terri and gets kissed in a spot that would have made the Montreal Screwjob completely different.

Kat hits a lame spear but Val has to stop Mae from flashing everyone. Terri is sent to the floor but there's no referee. The old chicks get in the ring and Mae kisses Val. Kat throws Terri to the floor but Moolah pulls Kat to the outside. Terri is the only one in as Val escapes Mae, giving Terri the win. Total mess but it was a bridge between the big match and the rest of the show.

Terri is stripped post match.

The Radicalz are ready for the six man tag but Eddie is more interested in melting Chyna with the Latino Heat.

Radicalz vs. Too Cool/Chyna

This would be Saturn/Malenko/Guerrero. They're brand new at this point and Dean is already Light Heavyweight Champion. Too Cool was their first feud and it was a big enough deal that Too Cool rode it to a tag title reign in a few months. Eddie and Scotty start things off and Scott has his hat knocked off almost immediately. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker puts Eddie down and it's off to Chyna, sending Guerrero running off to Dean.

Malenko loads up a fast powerbomb but Scotty clotheslines him down to break it up. Chyna and the Grandmaster suplex Malenko down and it's time to dance. Back to Eddie to face Grandmaster with Sexay hitting a quick suplex. Saturn breaks up the top rope legdrop though and the Radicalz take over. Perry comes in legally now and steals Grandmaster's dew rag, somehow making him look even more ridiculous.

Eddie comes back in and allows Grandmaster to make a tag to Scotty. That

goes badly for the non Radicalzas Scotty charges into a hot spot followed by the slingshot hilo for no cover. Grandmaster comes back in sans tag and throws Eddie to the floor as things fall apart. Scotty loads up a double Worm on Saturn and Malenko but an Eddie distraction lets them get back up. There's no one in the ring at the moment until we get back to Scotty vs. Eddie. Perry comes back in and superkicks Hotty down.

A top rope elbow hits Scotty but again there's no cover. Instead it's back to Guerrero who goes up but takes too long, allowing Scotty to crotch him. A superplex puts both guys down and there's the hot tag to Chyna. She cleans house with handspring elbows and a double low blow to Saturn and Malenko. Eddie decks her though, breaking part of her outfit in the process. Chyna escapes a powerbomb into one of her own, grabs Eddie's crotch and slams him down before finishing him with a sleeper drop.

Rating: D+. This didn't work for me for the most part but the main story of Chyna vs. Eddie was advanced which is the right idea. This would wind up meaning nothing (in a way) though as Chyna would fall victim to the Latino Heat the next day, starting a summer long relationship between the two. I guess that crotch grab changed her mind.

The redneckiest rednecks of all time won a contest to go to Wrestlemania.

Big Show and Shane say Show will win.

We get a clip from earlier of Angle beating up his mentor Bob Backlund after finding out that Backlund came up with the idea of Kurt defending both titles.

Angle asks a security guard for extra security for the post match celebration.

Intercontinental Title/European Title: Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit vs. Chris Jericho

This is an interesting idea. Angle holds both titles coming in and there are going to be two falls here. The first is for the Intercontinental Title and the second is for the European Title, so basically we're

getting back to back triple threats. Jericho guarantees to walk out of this match as the Ayatollah of Rock and Rollah while the other two will walk out with a shirt that complains about how lousy the shirt is as well as how bad the beating from Jericho was.

Benoit jumps Angle before the bell before heading inside for a clothesline from his fellow Canadian. All three are in now and Benoit chops Jericho, only to have his belly to back suplex escaped. Benoit breaks up a springboard dropkick by Jericho before fighting with Angle on the apron. Jericho hits the previously broken up dropkick to send both guys out to the floor. He joins them immediately, only to be sent into the steps by Kurt. Back in and a belly to belly suplex gets two for Angle on Jericho.

Jericho hits a backbreaker on Angle but Benoit shoves Jericho off the top and into the announce table for good measure. Benoit covers Angle for two before suplexing him down for the same. Jericho is back in for a dropkick to his fellow Canadian but Benoit comes right back with a clothesline for two more. Jericho bulldogs Angle down but Benoit comes back with chops of his own on the other Chris. Angle suplexes Benoit down but Jericho makes the save. Very back and forth action so far.

Jericho camel clutches Benoit but has to break it up to stop a charging Kurt. Angle hits a big suplex on Jericho for two as Benoit makes another save. Benoit rolls up Jericho in the corner but Angle dropkicks his head face first into the middle buckle to break it up. Jericho loads up a double arm suplex on Angle but gets countered into a crossface chickenwing. Benoit comes back in and dropkicks Angle before sending him to the floor and into the barricade. Back in and the Swan Dive to Jericho gives Benoit the first fall and the Intercontinental Title.

Very wisely Benoit immediately covers Jericho for an attempt at the European Title but it only gets two as Kurt dives in for the save. Angle suplexes Benoit down for two but takes too long on the moonsault attempt, allowing Jericho to break it up. Jericho loads up a belly to back superplex but Benoit suplexes Chris down, allowing Angle to miss the moonsault on Benoit. All three guys are down now until Angle covers Benoit for two. Jericho gets back into it with a Walls attempt on Angle,

only to have the other Chris break it up.

Everyone gets back up and it's Jericho with a spinwheel kick to take Benoit to the floor. The double powerbomb puts Angle down but Benoit comes back in for the Rolling Germans on Jericho. Benoit goes old school with a Dragon Supelx on Angle for two. Jericho hits the forearm on the referee by mistake, only to be put in the Crossface by the new IC Champion.

It gets an unseen tapout but Benoit releases, allowing Jericho to put Benoit in the Walls. Angle hits Jericho with a title belt but Benoit makes the save as the referee is awake again. Benoit suplexes Angle down again but misses the Swan Dive. Jericho slides in for the Lionsault on Benoit for the European Title to end things.

Rating: B+. Awesome match here which would have been match of the year when this style dominated in 2003. All three guys were the future generation of the company once we shifted to the technical style over on Smackdown in a few years, but here it's just awesome instead of a match of the times. This is one of the only things that people remember from this show and with good reason: it was awesome.

Vince says he'll be a factor in the main event. He's in Rock's corner tonight and doesn't think his family is dysfunctional. Vince promises to make it right tonight. You can smell the screwjob coming from here.

HHH doesn't like what Vince just said and promises not to lose.

D-Generation X vs. Rikishi/Kane

This would be Road Dogg and X-Pac with Tori as the final surviving members of the team. Kane has the wicked awesome inverted colors on tonight with mainly black trimmed with red. Tori slaps Paul Bearer before the match but gets choked by Kane for his efforts. It's a brawl to start with Rikishi hitting a quick Stinkface on Road Dogg. The fat man turns his attention to Tori but Pac makes a last minute save. D-X tries to leave to no avail as the big men slowly chase them down.

We finally get started with Pac vs. Rikishi and the smaller man hitting a

spinning kick in the corner but no Bronco Buster follows. Off to Roadie for the dancing punches and a forearm to put Rikishi down. The shaky knee gets two and it's back to Pac for some kicks to the chest which have no effect. A Samoan Drop puts Pac down and there's the tag to Kane. Kane gets to beat up X-Pac which is the whole point of the match. X-Pac avoids the Stinkface but Bearer throws Tori in to take his place. Kane tombstones Pac to end this.

Rating: D. This was another way to bridge between the two matches while also giving us a nice closure to this feud. Rikishi was a popular guy at the time so giving him a big match on a show like this was the right idea. Tori screwed over Kane months before so seeing her get what was coming to her was a nice feeling. The match sucked though.

Post match Too Cool and the San Diego Chicken come out to celebrate but Kane doesn't trust the bird. Everyone dances as Kane stares at the chicken. Either Pete is a far better dancer than expected or there's something afoot. Kane stares down at the bird but here's Pete Rose with a ball bat. This goes as badly as the other years have gone and it's a chokeslam and a Stinkface for the Hit King. I'll give the guy this: he's willing to do almost whatever the WWF asked of him.

Rock says it's been twelve months since he was world champion and there have been a lot of bad moments for Rock since then. After ever chokeslam, every Mandible Claw and every Pedigree, he's back here at Wrestlemania for his world title. If Rock has an ounce of blood and sweat, he's going to layeth the Smacketh Down tonight for the millions and millions.

Various celebrities are here tonight, including Michael Clarke Duncan and Martin Short.

Here's a recap of the main event which the company doesn't think is important enough to explain to you. HHH is defending champion and retired Foley at No Way Out. Rock won the Rumble but Big Show presented HHH with a video showing that Rock's feet hit first. This got Big Show a match at No Way Out for the #1 contendership where he beat Rock. Rock then earned the shot back by beating Big Show on Raw. Linda McMahon brought Foley back for one night only and if he wins tonight, there's a tournament

leading up to the title match at Backlash.

The real story here is that there's a McMahon in every corner: Vince with Rock because Vince respect him, Stephanie with her husband HHH, Linda with the feel good story of Foley and Shane with Big Show because he sees Show as his ticket to the top of the company. In other words, the wrestlers are just there as the McMahons are the real show here.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Mick Foley vs. HHH vs. Big Show

There are no tags here, no disqualification and you have to win by pin. Why there are no submissions is beyond me but whatever. Rock and Big Show fight as do the other two with the champion being punched down. Allegedly Foley was told a week before this match that he would be participating so he isn't in the best of shape. Granted that's normal for him so maybe it won't be that big of a deal.

Big Show runs over everyone and gorilla presses HHH and Rock. Foley gets a headbutt but tries to jump on Show's back, only to have the giant crush him against the mat. Rock comes back with right hands on Big Show but walks into a side slam for no cover. HHH jumps into a chokeslam attempt but Foley breaks it up with a low blow. Everyone triple teams Big Show to a big reaction and a running clothesline from Rock puts him down. They all stomp away at the giant but HHH and Foley just can't work together that long.

Foley blasts HHH in the ribs with a chair and hits Show in the back with it as well, allowing the Rock Bottom to get rid of the biggest guy in the match. We're down to three now and Shane is ticked off. HHH offers Foley an alliance against Rock but Foley says no. Instead HHH offers Rock an alliance against Foley but we get a Rock and Sock Connection reunion as HHH gets beaten down. HHH gets punched down and dropped with a double clothesline.

The champion is sent to the floor but the Connection won't fight each other. Instead they head to the outside and beat up HHH even more to the fans' delight. Rock picks up the bell but accidentally blasts Foley in the head. Foley gets up quickly and finds a barbed wire 2x4. HHH saves himself with a low blow and a shot to Foley's ribs with the board. Rock

comes back in and is backdropped to the floor, allowing Foley to hit the double arm DDT on HHH. It's Socko time and Rock adds a belt shot to take HHH down.

Rock loads up the Elbow but Foley puts the Claw on him to break it up. HHH hits them both low to put them both down but Rock gets back up first and pounds away on the champion. Foley gets in a shot to Rock for two and a double arm DDT gets the same. Vince slides in a chair for no apparent reason but Foley gets it first. It gets kicked back into his face by Rock for two as HHH makes the save. Why would he do something like that? A running knee lift gets two on Rock but HHH doesn't save this time. Interesting.

HHH and Mick start working together for a bit and a knee drop gets two on Rock. They head to the floor with Mick's knees being sent HARD into the steps. Mick picks up said steps and cracks Rock in the head with them as Stephanie yells at Linda. HHH puts Rock on the table for the Foley elbow through it...but Mick can't jump that far and crashes ribs first into the edge of the table. HHH hits about three elbows of his own to put Rock through the table as the match continues to drag.

Back inside and HHH Pedigrees Foley for two and a big eruption from the crowd. A BIG chair shot to the head puts Foley down and Linda is panicking. HHH Pedigrees Mick onto the chair and the career is over again. We're down to two now and HHH is somehow even more hated than he was before. Foley gets a big standing ovation but turns around to come back to the ring. He picks up the barbed wire and blasts HHH in the head to give us one last BANG BANG moment.

We're finally down to HHH vs. Rock after twenty minutes of glorified preliminary stuff. Rock gets two off the barbed wire stuff and they head up to the stage for the required main event brawling. Rock suplexes HHH down on the concrete and does the same with a clothesline. They head into the crowd for even more "fighting" which means walking with the occasional punching. A backdrop puts HHH back at ringside where Rock picks up the steps, only to have HHH knock them onto Rock with a chair. He pounds on the steps with the chair to crush Rock even further underneath them.

A piledriver on the steps keeps Rock down even longer before we head inside again. The piledriver only gets two and Rock is somehow up again to slug away with right hands. Rock Bottom and Pedigree are both countered with HHH being backdropped out to the floor. Rock hits a kind of spinebuster to put HHH down and there's a suplex through the table for good measure. Both guys are basically dead now but it's Rock up first.

Vince can't handle the lack of the spotlight anymore though and rams HHH into the post. Cue Shane again to take out Vince with a monitor shot to the head but Papa gets up a few seconds later to beat up his son. Shane comes back with a chairshot as we're ignoring THE MAIN EVENT OF WRESTLEMANIA to see Shane and Vince fight. As a bleeding Vince is taken out, we cut to a shot of Stephanie with the most vapid look you'll ever see on her face.

We're allowed to return to the match now with right hands from Rocky. A DDT gets two on the champion as does a tilt-a-whirl slam. HHH comes back with a facebuster and a barbed wire shot to the head of Rock. At least he's nice enough to loudly ask "ARE YOU OK" before being catapulted into Shane. There's the Rock Bottom but Rock can't cover. Instead here's Vince for the 87th time tonight to slap Shane around. Then, as if you would expect anything else, he turns on Rock with a chair shot. Stephanie still fails at acting as HHH chairs Rock down again for the pin to retain and kill the crowd even deader.

Rating: D+. And that's being VERY generous. This was the definition of McMahon overkill as it was ALL about them with the match literally being ignored at times while they had their repeated drama. On top of that the match sucked with the first 20 minutes being there to get us to the last 20 minutes which doesn't do anyone any good. The rest of the match was just a big mess with no real story to it as we were all at the mercy of the McMahons. Instead of focusing on HHH vs. Rock, we had to wait 40 minutes for Vince to turn on Rock for no apparent reason. Also Rock would win the title at Backlash, making this entirely pointless.

Post match Vince and Stephanie reunite in the ring. Shane gets back in but before we can get more of McMahon World, Rock comes in with Rock Bottoms for all three McMahons. You might notice that HHH, the FREAKING

WORLD CHAMPION, is nowhere in sight for all this. Oh wait he pops up on the apron to get punched down before Rock hits the People's Elbow on Stephanie (who doesn't even move an inch when it hits). The last shot of the show: the McMahons recovering of course.

Overall Rating: D. This show is the low point of the best year in the company's history and it's because of the McMahon drama. Again, there is zero reason to have them dominate a main event like this other than that's what they wanted to happen. The stuff that was good though, while limited, was VERY good with the midcard title match and the tag title match blowing away everything else going on with this show. That main event is a BIG blow to it though given how long the thing ran. Check out those two matches and then go pick up the N64 game instead of the show as it's WAY more entertaining.

Ratings Comparison

Big Boss Man/Bull Buchanan vs. D'Lo Brown/Godfather

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Hardcore Battle Royal

Original: C+

Redo: B-

T&A vs. Head Cheese

Original: F

Redo: D-

Edge and Christian vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Hardy Boyz

Original: B+

Redo: A-

The Kat vs. Terri Runnels

Original: F

Redo: N/A

Radicalz vs. Too Cool/Chyna

Original: D

Redo: D+

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Chris Jericho

Original: A

Redo: B+

Rikishi/Kane vs. D-Generation X

Original: D+

Redo: D

HHH vs. The Rock vs. Big Show vs. Mick Foley

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Overall Rating

Original: D

Redo: D

Not much changes in a few years.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/23/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-16-they-thought-this-was-a-good-idea/>

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